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Shlomo Avineri
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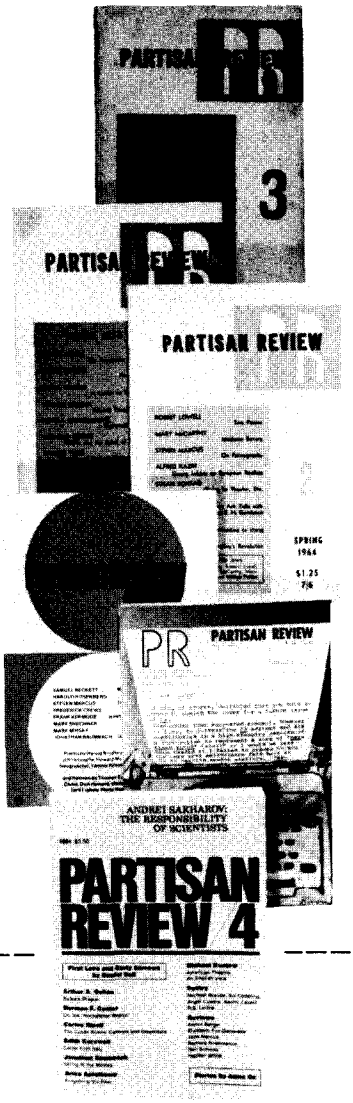

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CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

ARTICLES

Vladimir Solovyov	*Knowing the KGB*	**167**
Larry McCaffery	*An Interview with Donald Barthelme*	**184**
Mark Shechner	*Papa*	**213**
Steven Marcus	*Culture and Psychoanalysis*	**224**
Ross Wetzsteon	*Sam Shepard: Escape Artist*	**253**
Leon Botstein	*The Viennese Connection*	**262**
Bernard Crick	*Koestler's Koestler*	**274**
Shlomo Avineri	*Letter from Israel*	**284**

FICTION

John Shea	*The Letters*	**194**

POEMS **238**

Edward Barrett, Daryl Hine, Peter Schjeldahl
Harvey Shapiro, Carolyn Stoloff, Bohdan Zadura

COMMENT

Cynthia Ozick	*What Literature Means*	**294**
Kathleen Agena	*U.S. Policy and the Third World*	**298**

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

David Layzer	*Hans Bethe: Prophet of Energy* by Jeremy Bernstein	**305**
Millicent Bell	*Alice James* by Jean Strouse	**309**
Philip Stevick	*Edges of Extremity: Some Problems of Literary Modernism* by Kingsley Widmer	**315**

LETTERS **318**

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Editor's Notes

Angel Cuadro, whose poems appeared in our #4 1981 issue, has been a political prisoner in Cuba since 1967, publishing several volumes of his poems outside Cuba. Upon publication of *A Correspondence of Poems (From Jail)* in 1979, he was transferred to the remote and inhuman prison of Boniato, where he remains, isolated from outside contact.

The interview with Jan Kavan, which appeared in the #1 1982 issue, is an abridged version of one broadcast over Station WBAI in New York, under the sponsorship of the group Europe-In-Formation. Jan Kavan was an editor and student activist during the Prague Spring. Living now in exile in London, he is director of the Palach Press.

The correct title of Frank Conroy's novel mentioned in the #1 1982 Contributors' Notes is *Stop-Time*.

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Vladimir Solovyov

KNOWING THE KGB

1. The Wages of Fear

Although by a miracle I managed to escape both from the harsh measures of the Committee of State Security and from close collaboration with it—those two things being the Scylla and Charybdis of "Soviet man"—the KGB still torments my imagination. In the last, or dissident, phase of my career in the Soviet Union, my case was neither typical nor interesting. Like other dissidents, I waged my struggle with the aid of the *New York Times*, the Voice of America, and the BBC; in other words, with exotic, imported weapons unavailable to the ordinary Soviet citizen, be he blue-collar worker, doctor, artist, engineer, or writer. I myself was in that same underprivileged position before I became a dissident. And today, when I compare the two, I venture to say that that typical position demands much more courage, resourcefulness, and skill than the dissident stance, although unlike the latter, it is not under the klieg lights of the world press. Having been in both positions, I would even say that the move from the typical to the atypical one—the changeover from a day-to-day, unnoticed, exhausting, and fatally predetermined struggle with the KGB to an open, public, knockdown, drag-out fight with it—is usually a result of the fact that the person in question has proven unable to bear up under the earlier, routine kind of struggle. But he delays his defeat with this shifting of the fight to a ring in full view of the public where the rules are different, where even the opponent is not quite the same as before, and where the latter must—for a certain time at least—abide by the rules imposed on him. To draw an analogy with another sport, the ordinary Soviet citizen, in his contest with the KGB, might be compared to a long-distance runner, while the dissident is a sprinter. The difference is one between a line of conduct steadily adhered to, on the one hand, and bursts of heroism on the other. In

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Translated from the Russian by Guy Daniels.

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my case, I felt relieved when I switched from the former to the latter, which is alluring by the very fact of its short duration, regardless of its outcome: prison or emigration.

I have heard many accounts of encounters with KGB agents, and in most cases the teller of the story says he behaved heroically or, at the very least, wittily. On the basis of my own experience, however, I am inclined to doubt such accounts. More often than not, they are merely an attempt by the storyteller to get revenge for the humiliation he underwent. They remind me of the American comic strip in which the brave little mouse, Jerry, is forever making a fool out of the blustering cat, Tom. The trouble is that in real life a mouse cannot successfully oppose a cat, no matter how brave, inventive, or witty the mouse may be.

Humor is wasted on a *gebist* (KGB agent): you might as well be joking with yourself. And such people attach no value to courage. On the contrary, they regard it as an evil that must be promptly eradicated. In this connection, I recall a conversation I had with a *gebist* named Yury Ivanovich Vetrov in the reading room of the Neva Hotel in Leningrad. When he proposed that I become a KGB agent, I politely declined on the grounds that I was too busy and, for that matter, too unprofessional. But Vetrov interpreted my politeness as an acceptance, and suggested that I choose a cover name. I decided to joke my way out of the situation and, glancing to the right at a magazine rack with photos of the Politburo members on it, I said my choice of a cover name was "Brezhnev." Vetrov flushed and replied that such a cover name wouldn't do. Then he glanced to the left, where a map of the Soviet Union had been put up, and asked, "Would Arkhangelsky suit you?"*

I felt as if I were inside an invisible cage, and I tried to shake loose the bars that pent me in. "I'm not about to become your agent!"

"Don't lose your temper. If you don't want to be Arkhangelsky, you can remain Brezhnev. We're ready to make a concession to you on that point."

"But I don't want to be either Arkhangelsky or Brezhnev. I want to go on being Solovyov."

"Okay, just as you like. We give cover names to agents for their own good, not for our convenience. You see, lots of people are afraid

*Arkhangelsk is a large port on the White Sea.

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of losing their good names, and prefer writing us reports under a pseudonym. But we aren't offended by that."

When I got home I took a shower, scrubbing myself all over. It was something I did whenever I had had a talk with a *gebist*. Later I began to suffer from syphilophobia and monstrous pangs of conscience at the thought that I might have infected my wife, Lena Klepikova. Seeing doctors was of no help. At every opportunity, I would take out my penis to see how far the disease had progressed.

I shall not describe the other aftereffects of the meetings with KGB people to which I was summoned, but I experienced a good variety of them. They were the wages of fear. I paid in humiliation, shattered nerves, insomnia, illness both real and imaginary, and madness. And now I am paying for that fear with emigration—a course I decided on when I realized that those meetings were not only humiliating me but gradually destroying me.

(And what if I had not been a Jew with recourse to emigration as, literally, a way out? Or what if I had lived at another time, when that way out was not available to Jews?)

Hot showers and soap could not wash off the shame of those meetings. I decided, then, to make use of them professionally, as a journalist and scholar, and I began to make notes on what had been said at them. This was my revenge for humiliation and a liberation from my fears—somewhat in the manner of Goya's *Capriccios*. Yet in another way it only added to those fears: now I began to fear for my swelling manuscript. I was afraid they would come and take it away from me and put me in prison.

This article is composed of two disparate things: on the one hand, my fragmentary diary notes, steeped in hatred; on the other, my present attitude—one of scholarly detachment and almost of indifference—toward the organization that caused me so much nervous anxiety when I was living in the USSR. It is rather like two different descriptions of a zoo, one of which has been written by a casual visitor or a scientific observer, and the other by a beast in a cage. The nature of the beast—whether it be a lion, a wolf, a hyena, a jackal, or a snake—does not matter. It does not, because any visitor to the KGB, regardless of what he has been before that visit, is transformed into one of its agents.

The technique used in effecting those transformations is quite simple—no more complex than Iago's plot against Othello. But, just

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as Othello was powerless when he came up against Iago's machinations, so the ordinary Soviet citizen is powerless vis-à-vis the Committee of State Security. Inter alia, that technique involves a weapon that the KGB uses frequently and skillfully, and which is plainly underestimated by outside observers: the so-called gendarme folklore. By this is meant rumors about the KGB that are spread by the KGB itself.

The most widespread rumors, and those that most poison one's life, are rumors about ties with the KGB on the part of one's friends—or even on the part of people that one doesn't know. I did not have a single friend who was not rumored to have KGB connections. More accurately, I did have one acquaintance whom no one suspected of having such shameful ties, until finally his very spotlessness began to appear suspect and he was labelled an informer on that basis alone. There is quite simply no one who has been exempted from such rumors—not Solzhenitsyn, not Sinyavsky, not Sakharov. And Solzhenitsyn himself, in his memoirs, points the finger at Valery Chalidze, who was chairman of the Moscow Human Rights Committee and is now editor of the Russian dissident publication, *A Chronicle of Human Rights in the USSR*. Finally, there is a joke about Brezhnev's whispering to Kosygin: "Watch out for Andropov [chairman of the KGB]—they say he's a snitch!"

I confess that I don't know which there is more of in the USSR, KGB-phobia or real activity by the KGB. But is that question really important? Is it important by which means we are terrorized—by reality or by our imaginations? In the final analysis, our imagination, too, is a product of reality. "Their hypnosis is our terror," wrote author Fazil Iskander in this connection. What difference does it make whether your phone is bugged, or whether it just seems to you to be bugged? In either case, you can't say what you're thinking. And can you even think what you are *really* thinking?

The same thing applies to "stoolie-phobia." It creates an atmosphere of fear, regardless of whether the person in question is an authentic snitch or a seeming one—merely a figment of your imagination. By means of spreading rumors, the KGB does more than take on an additional dimension that it had not previously possessed in reality: it anticipates the future, providing a picture of that total power that it is in the process of attaining.

Fears have one most regrettable attribute: they may be realized.

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2. The Coincidence of Opposites

I don't know whether any of the KGB people have read G.K. Chesterton's novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday*. But even if they haven't, the police procedure described by Chesterton is so universal and inevitable that ignorance or a lack of talent is no obstacle to its implementation in the real world. This novel tells of an underground revolutionary organization in England, all of whose members had most unusual cover names: the days of the week. "Thursday," the main character, is sent by the police to infiltrate the organization. His mission is to gain the trust of the other members and render their activity harmless. To his surprise, he discovers that another member of the organization is an agent of Scotland Yard. Then he finds out the same thing about a second member, a third, and a fourth, until finally it turns out that all of the members, including the mysterious leader called "Sunday," are police spies. Having realized it was inevitable that a subversive organization would come into being, Scotland Yard had preferred to create that organization itself.

In Russia, such a novel could not have been written, if only because its plot would not have seemed paradoxical. To the contrary, it would have resembled a real-life story. Could it be that Chesterton took that unusual plot from the usual, routine practice of the Russian police? After all, many revolutionary actions were engineered by the Okhrana, the czarist secret police. Thus, between 1901 and 1903, one Zubatov, chief of the Special Section of that police force, engineered the founding of Russia's first trade unions, which were thoroughly infiltrated by police agents. In 1905, Father Gapon, with the knowledge of the police—and possibly on instructions from them—organized a mass demonstration against the government at the Winter Palace. As we know, the demonstrators were fired on by troops, and the event went down in history as Bloody Sunday. Or, take the case of the student Dmitri Bogrov, who in 1911 assassinated Prime Minister Stolypin in a theater in Kiev. To this day it is not known whether he did it on orders of the Okhrana (whose agent he was), on instructions from the Social Revolutionary Party (of which he was a member), or on his own initiative. About all we know is that Bogrov, when asked why he had killed Stolypin and not Nicholas II, who was standing nearby, answered that he was afraid he might provoke a pogrom. (Bogrov was a Jew.)

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It has frequently been suggested that the burning of the police files immediately after the February Revolution of 1917 was engineered by revolutionaries who were afraid they would be exposed as double agents. Stalin, it would appear, had especially good reason to entertain such apprehensions.

In the Stalin era, the chief activity of the secret police was creative. Subversive plots and secret organizations were created *after* the arrest of their "members," who had known nothing of their existence. They were created in the course of interrogations within prison walls. This was absurdist theatre, rather like that of Beckett or Ionesco, that was completely divorced from reality. There was one director with a huge cast of actors, all of whom played the same role: an enemy of the people.

As for the present day, one may well assume not only that there are provocateurs among the dissidents, but that their number is greater than has so far seemed to be the case. After all, exposing KGB agents is exclusively the job of that same KGB, when it decides to switch the role of "our man" from that of provocateur to that of a witness in court or of a newspaper propagandist. That is what happened, for instance, to Sanya Lipavsky. A Jewish "refusenik," a dissident, and the roommate of Anatoly Shcharansky, Lipavsky exposed Shcharansky in court and in the Soviet press. But the one-shot role of exposer is less useful than the permanent role of spy and provocateur, and this permits the assumption that there are more unexposed KGB agents among the dissidents than exposed ones. Thus there is a solid basis for the KGB-phobia one finds among the dissidents.

One day a *gebist* by the name of Boris Pavlovich Chudinov brought me a poor photocopy of a manuscript put together by an "unofficial" group of poets that was politically suspect to the KGB. He asked me, "Could you look this over and give us a reader's report? We need one that is competently written. (You needn't be afraid—this is a strictly literary matter.) And you, after all, are a literary critic."

I believed what he said about their needing a strictly literary reader's report. I also believed that, knowing my tastes and my tendency to be hypercritical, they had rightly assumed that the report would probably be negative. And that was just what they needed so that, in addition to bringing political charges against the poets in question, they could point to their literary incompetence.

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They could say, in effect, "Do you think these people are really poets? They are parasites, subversives, anti-Soviets." Of course they could have had an evaluation prepared by a well-known literary critic, citing his skill and his prestige. But even an anonymous reader's report was useful to them. As Chudinov once said to me, "Go and see a few plays in that theater. You can be our literary lookout."

On both occasions it was hard to refuse; but I realized that I was on the edge of a whirlpool that could suck a man under. In that situation, if you yield you are no longer a literary critic but Agent Number Such-and-Such—and no one will ever hear of you again. So I began to bargain with them, saying in effect: "I can write reviews for newspapers and magazines, but I can't do readers' reports for you. And of course I can review only things that have already been published."

"Well," came the reply, "I doubt whether those things will ever get published. And what if somebody from that group asks you instead of the KGB?"

That same evening I had a telephone call from K.K. He was the leader of the group of poets, although he was better known for his exotic way of life and his sexual perversions than for his poetry. Everyone was amazed at his bold behavior. "He'll overdo it," people would say of him, "and get sent to prison." And indeed, his scandalous way of life did seem to violate all accepted norms. Furthermore, against the dull backdrop of the Leningrad scene, it seemed like the highest form of dissidence.

It turned out that what K.K. wanted to ask me was the same thing Chudinov had asked me: whether I wouldn't write a critique of the group's poetic miscellany. This time, however, declining was easier.

What really amazed me about this whole business was not so much K.K.'s duplicity but the thoughtlessness—almost the frivolity—with which the KGB sacrificed its victims. And I must admit that this was one of the reasons, although not the chief one, for my decision to stay as far away from the "Committee" as possible.

Unlike art, life cannot reach an almost absolute state of perfection. Hence, one cannot imagine all of the Soviet dissidents, headed by Sakharov, as characters in Chesterton's novel. On the other hand, Soviet life offers more complex models than the English literary wit could have imagined. "Provocation" is a very low,

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primitive form of collaboration (taking that word in the sense of "coauthorship"); and it is, moreover, a matter of coercion. True collaboration assumes equality between the parties, and not the subordination of one to the other. It is antagonism; that is, interaction on the basis of contraries, not similarities, like the interaction in sexual love—what was called *coincidentia oppositorum* by Nicholas of Cusa, the last medieval philosopher and the first one of the Renaissance. This bond is stronger than any other: enemies need each other more than they need friends. They confirm each other's existence. And the chief, unrecognized principle of that bond—which at first glance seems unnatural but is actually the most natural thing that can be—is "Love thine enemy." How could it be otherwise, when the least little sign of dissent confirms the necessity of the KGB? On the one hand, that organization would seem to have an interest in putting down the opposition, and on the other, an interest in cultivating it, even by artificial means. This explains why the KGB brands as dissent even routine complaints about red tape, or activities of literary clubs, which, as recently as the Khrushchev era, fell in the category of social or public behavior that was entirely acceptable to the State. If today those filers of complaints and aspiring writers did not exist, the KGB would have to invent dissidents, using utterly loyal citizens of the USSR as raw material.

But the dissident movement needs the KGB as much as the KGB needs it. Their genesis is a product of reciprocal, not unilateral, action. Among the many verbose, self-intoxicated reminiscences of former dissidents, one finds some amazing instances of a dissident's nostalgia for the KGB, and even for its reprisals. This is a special kind of political masochism. Nor should it be cause for wonder: the very existence of dissent in the totalitarian Soviet Union is postulated by the existence of the KGB. Consider, for example, the following quotation from Vladimir Bukovsky, famous for his ten-year term in prison and then, after he had been exchanged for the Chilean Communist Luis Corvallana, for his ten-minute audience with President Carter. Bukovsky first describes how he and his friends, carrying placards with slogans on them, took part in a demonstration. Then he says:

> But no one interfered with us. The streets were empty, as if they were depopulated . . . . And for a moment I was frightened. Suppose nothing happened? We had figured that they would seize our placards and arrest us. Could it be that we would have

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to take those placards back home with us? I had no intention of going back home.

One would think only lovers on their way to a tryst would be so eager. Lest the reader worry too much, I note that Romeo did finally keep his tryst with Juliet, and the *gebisty* did finally break up the demonstration.

The bond between the dissidents and the KGB is one based on contrariety, but not on compulsion. Ultimately, however, even the contrariety on which the bond is based inevitably leads to a paradoxical similarity. Not to a complete identity, perhaps, but to an identity as regards methods. In order to oppose the enemy, one must learn his methods and use his weapons. The hangman's victims learn from the hangman; the victims of persecution learn from those who persecute them: "If you run with wolves, you must howl like a wolf." Hence the undemocratic character of the Russian democrats: their intolerance, elitism, dogmatism, bureaucratism, fear of criticism, demagogy, and other traits that they deplore as attributes of the regime, and yet take on themselves.

In early 1977, in the Moscow subway, there was an explosion that killed several passengers. Immediately following it, two statements were issued. One of them, from Victor Louis, an English journalist (but a Soviet citizen) with close ties to the KGB, blamed the explosion on the dissidents. The other, from academician Sakharov, blamed it on the KGB. But what if that explosion had been a mere accident? Alas! Given the sharp polarization in the Soviet Union, there is no room for accidents—they are outside the law. The dissidents and the authorities, it would seem, are competing with each other in giving reality an ideological tincture.

Finally, three Armenians—none of them dissidents or KGB agents—were charged with having set off the explosion, convicted, and shot. They were tried behind closed doors, which raises the presumption that they were scapegoats. But, of course, the crime had to be pinned on *somebody*, otherwise the omnipotent KGB might be suspected of incompetence.

Here an interesting question suggests itself: would the Armenians' lives have been spared if the Chief of State had been not Brezhnev, but Solzhenitsyn? or Sakharov? The course followed by liberal dissidents like Sakharov has by now sharply diverged from that followed by such nationalistic dissidents as Solzhenitsyn. The two groups are calling down curses upon each other, and each no

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doubt prefers the Soviet regime to the other group. What if both are right? What if either group, if it came to power, turned out to be worse than the Soviet regime?

That kind of thing happened, after all, in the case of the Bolsheviks when they came to power. Instead of annihilating the previous regime as they had at first wanted to do, they strengthened and improved it. In his book, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, Richard Pipes has shown how much the Bolsheviks learned from their predecessors and persecutors. The Bolsheviks' notion of what government should be was a mirror image of the czarist regime, but an intensified one. What happened was this: the czarist regime had, quite naturally, shown the Bolsheviks its worst side—the police apparatus. When the Bolsheviks came to power, they replicated that aspect of the czarist regime that was so well known to them, and the police apparatus was elevated to the state level. But there was a difference. During their oppositionist phase, the Bolsheviks had become familiar with all the defects of that apparatus—defects thanks to which they had been able to overcome it. And when they acceded to power, they got rid of those shortcomings, so that under Stalin the police machinery came close to absolute perfection.

There is a legend about a knight who, upon returning to his native city after slaying a dragon, so frightened all the children who saw him that they took to their heels. Badly shaken by this unexpected kind of welcome, the savior of his country looked at his reflection in a puddle and saw, growing on his own shoulders, the dragon's head that he had recently cut off.

I cannot apply this analogy directly to the present situation, but I can extend it: today the dragons' heads sprout not after a victory but during the very struggle. And I fear that the knights of the Russian dissident movement, made ruthless by the long struggle and by frequent defeats, are sprouting dragons' heads even more rapidly than did the dragon slayer of the legend.

3. Ideology: the KGB's Fuel

But let us come back to real, natural-born dragons. Upon what do they subsist?

The Minotaur in the Cretan labyrinth gobbled up criminals. Besides criminals, once a year he got a tribute from Athens: seven

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young men and seven maidens. The Phoenician Moloch, the Chinese dragon, and almost all other kindred monsters also required human sacrifices. But the KGB is different: it needs not only human victims but ideological fuel as well to keep its motor running. Without such fuel—for example, in the Khrushchev era and in the early phase of the Brezhnev period—that monster's motor has often idled and given signs of stopping.

The KGB is the kind of machine that cannot function productively without inspiration. Communist ideology, the type of fuel consumed by the KGB's predecessors, yielded a marked growth of productivity in the late thirties. But it had lost much of its potency by World War II, and Stalin, by way of emergency procedure, tried to replace it with another kind of ideological fuel: great-power nationalism. He died, however, before the switchover was fully effected, and his successor sharply reduced deliveries of ideological fuel—not only to the KGB but to the nation as a whole.

It is from the KGB's natural and inevitable ally among the right-wing oppositionists—the Russian nationalist chauvinists—that it is making ready to get (and is already beginning to get) its ideological fuel. In and of itself, neo-Stalinism cannot serve as such a fuel, if only because in the Stalin era people were sacrificed in the name of an ideology which no longer inspires anyone. In the view of the Russian nationalists, that ideology—along with other ideas of Western origin—is contraindicated for Russia. So it is that in the current attempt to rehabilitate him, the Stalin one hears about is only the Stalin of this last ten years: the military leader and the consistently reactionary anti-Semite ("Black-Hundreder") who fought the good fight against Zionism and cosmopolitanism. In the current situation in the USSR, the very fact of an alliance between two kindred opposition groups—one political (the KGB, the Armed Forces, the neo-Stalinists, and the Party Central Committee) and the other ideological (the Russian Party, as the modern-day Russian chauvinists prefer to label themselves)—means that that alliance is the most likely successor to the current Soviet regime. And already, in the present-day Regency period, its influence is almost total.

It is precisely this dual sovereignty—the alliance between the old, weakened evil and the new evil gathering strength—that was not taken into account by American political leaders at the turning point in Russian history. The futile gestures of the Carter-Brzezinski administration were aimed at old Russian leaders who were no

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longer anything but symbols, at a time when the power was already passing from the ossified Politburo into the hands of the "iron young men" (as Brezhnev's successors are called in Moscow) of the military-political apparatus, headed by the KGB, and of the ideological apparatus, headed by the Russian Party.

These men are not disturbed by what the West thinks of Russia. They are concerned with what they see as more pressing business—restoring a disciplined, powerful, and impressive empire, in view of the obvious threats to its existence—China, the West, resistance by the satellite nations, and a fifth column within Russia itself. Under these circumstances, an Olympiad without the Americans was advantageous to the "iron young men," since they favor isolationism over détente. (One American, at any rate, has recognized this: Harrison Salisbury, in his article "A Boon for the KGB," which appeared in the *New York Times*, January 31, 1980.) Even the grain embargo worked to their advantage, because it is easier to unite a half-starved population than one that is surfeited—especially under the slogan of hatred for an imperialist power that is trying to starve Russia out.

The "iron young men" are preparing for a war with China—one that they see as inevitable. They figure (not without reason) that it would be to their advantage to start that war, and to start it soon, before China grows out of its atomic diapers.

Russia's "iron young men" long ago realized how much they had to gain from the Carter administration. It was during his administration, and thanks to it, that they were able to consolidate their position in Russia. They have now pushed their way up close to the top of the power structure, and it is quite possible that in the late seventies they carried out, behind Brezhnev's broad back, an indiscernible *coup d'etat*, the only outward manifestation of which was the invasion of Afghanistan.

I once had a talk with KGB agent Boris Pavlovich Chudinov that completely astounded me. I had had a rather loud quarrel with a violent chauvinist, and was later summoned to a KGB office, where I was given a chewing-out for the quarrel. Chudinov was present, but took no part in the proceedings. Afterwards, when the two of us were alone, I asked him point-blank, "What was all that fuss about? You'd think I'd done direct damage to the interests of the KGB and to X, your agent."

"It's not a matter of X," Chudinov said placatingly, "but of the

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people he represents. We have two subsidiaries, you know: the Russian Party and the PLO."

It was the mention of the PLO that really made me prick up my ears, because it was the first time I had heard such a thing. Incidentally, I wasn't sure who was the subsidiary of whom. "Do you mean," I asked, "that the KGB had a hand in the Munich massacre?"

"Well, I think it's safe to say that nobody really wanted to kill them. If the Israelis had been more willing to talk, everything would have turned out all right, as I see it. Of course, the Palestinians can't be controlled right down to a T. They're like a genie. Once you let him out of the bottle . . . ."

"But isn't the KGB afraid its people will be exposed? After all, not long ago Günther Guillaume of Willy Brandt's staff was exposed as a spy for East Germany."

Chudinov smiled ironically. "Don't feel sorry for Guillaume. We ourselves expose people like him—or we help to expose them. For us, his exposure was a thousand times more important than the work he did."

Then, satisfied with the impression he had made on me, he added, "And you think we're nothing but fools."

I have no notion why Chudinov was so frank with me—both on that occasion, and on another that I am still afraid to write about. His frankness, however, was not much to my liking, since in a way it deepened my involvement with the KGB—something that was already a burden to me. As for what he told me about Guillaume, it did not alter my opinion of the KGB's intellectual level. Their exposure of their own agent (if, indeed, they had actually exposed him) had been prompted by the instinct of self-preservation. Soon after the scandal broke, Brandt had to resign as chancellor. His Ost-Politik, however, withstood the blow. It was only later that it collapsed, along with détente, with the accession to power of Carter and his political Mephistopheles, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

And what if, despite the hatred between Brzezinski and the Russians, he, like his successors on Reagan's team, was just what they wanted? For today the KGB needs enemies more than it needs friends, whether those enemies be foreign or domestic. Enemies stimulate its activity and justify its existence, both politically and ideologically. The collapse of détente, along with an exacerbated feeling that Russia is threatened from without, and isolated from its neighbors and even from those nations subjugated to it, dictates to

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the KGB an alliance with the Russian chauvinists. And the latter, for their part, figure that with the aid of the KGB they can take over power in Russia. The very fact that this process is gradual testifies to its inevitability and irreversibility—in the foreseeable future, at any rate.

4. How Many Agents Does the Committee of State Security Have?

I remember that whenever we Russian writers met with American tourists, there were so many KGB agents around that it seemed as if there were not two but three groups of people present: the Americans, the Russians, and the *gebisty*. Whom were the *gebisty* supposed to be watching? The Americans? Yes, of course, but mostly they were keeping an eye on us Russians, and on our behavior with foreigners. Incidentally, in KGB lingo meetings with foreigners are called "contacts," which suggests meetings with people who have infectious diseases. (In general, medical terminology is common usage with the KGB people: both they themselves and the rest of us employ a strictly physiological term for them: "the organs.")

Likewise, the Soviet borders are protected not so much against foreign infiltrators as against Soviet citizens, so as to block their natural exodus from the fatherland. It might not be a bad idea, by the way, if those liberal American senators who want to see free emigration from Russia were to make some preliminary calculations (if only by way of comparison with the number of Cuban boat people) as to the scope of that exodus if the Soviet authorities were to yield to threats and open the Soviet borders to all those desiring to leave. I very much fear that free emigration from the Soviet Union would be a much greater disaster for the United States than for the USSR.

I would even venture to say that the numerous KGB agents abroad are primarily serving the internal needs of the Soviet Union. In other words, they are keeping an eye on one another, and only in their spare time do they keep tabs on foreigners and things foreign. This is something I myself was able to observe during several trips abroad as a tourist. When a group of Soviet tourists travels abroad, they are enveloped by an especially dense atmosphere of

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"Sovietism": suspicion, tailing, denunciations, threats, blackmail, secret searches, provocations. Of course, one is surrounded by the same things in Russia itself. But there they exist in a more diluted state, whereas the Soviet tourist experiences them in their quintessence, in sharp focus, in their highest degree. During one such trip to the Benelux countries, I approached a writer whom I shall call X and told him that before our departure the KGB people had warned me that he was especially suspect, and had suggested that I keep an eye on him. At this, he broke out laughing and said that they had told him the same thing about me, and had suggested that *he* keep an eye on *me*. He added that, as a result, he was afraid to look in my direction lest "keeping an eye out" inadvertently and spontaneously turned into tailing me.

Our visit to the Soviet Embassy in The Hague was one of the most demoralizing visits we made during that trip. It was just our luck that on that same day some Dutchmen staged a demonstration before the embassy in defense of the Soviet Jews. All of us Soviet tourists were shoved into a small room. Then the doors were locked and the windows closed: one had the feeling that an alarm had been sounded for Combat Readiness. Finally, when the demonstrators had dispersed, the members of the embassy staff took their rage out on us.

"If one of those Zionist bastards got into our hands, we'd really let him have it!" exclaimed vice-consul Vladimir Ivanovich, gesticulating wildly. "We're the ones who run things here, on this little plot of Soviet land, with enemies on every hand. The only laws in force here are Soviet laws—no others! We are the masters here—not the Dutchmen! And if one of our enemies comes in here, we won't give him a kindly send-off. As for this country, it's a mere flyspeck on the map. And it's been taken in by the Zionists—rallies and provocations almost every day! But all we have to do is push a button, and there won't be any more Holland. We'll swallow it up without a trace, and nobody will remember it—just like Czechoslovakia . . . . These Dutchmen have forgotten that their whole country depends on dikes, and just barely manages to stay intact. But what if we used just one little bomb—on the dikes? Eh? What then?"

Supplementing my experiences in Holland with the tragic story of a Soviet actress who, one year before, had tried to stay on in Holland but had been unlucky enough to trust a Dutch woman who

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turned out to be a KGB agent, I wrote a novel called *A Little Bomb on the Dikes*. (The Russian original is being published in the Israeli magazine *22*.)

Such trips abroad are useful in that they enable the Soviet tourist to see rather more of his own country than of the country he visits. The view that he gets of his own country, moreover, is not one blurred by everyday impressions: he sees it in its naked essence, without varnish or prejudices. The country is held together by fear. The level of fear is regulated by the nation's requirements, but is never allowed to drop below a certain point. Today, as I leaf through my notes on the KGB, it seems to me that they were written not by Vladimir Solovyov, but Vladimir Strakh (Fear). To a reader from a free society, they will no doubt seem fantastic; but a reader from the Soviet Union would see them as a boring, routine account of something familiar to everyone.

Recently, as I was looking through the May 4, 1977, *New York Times*, I ran across the following:

> Each person has his norm, his quota of fear, just as each person can sleep only so many hours, then wakes up. I have had my quota of fear. I have used it all up.

The words are my own, accurately translated by David Shipler, then a Moscow correspondent. The next day, the Voice of America broadcast Shipler's article in Russian, and I can remember how much some listeners were stirred by my remark about the quota of fear. But one acquaintance of mine said, "That's true. Fear does have its limits, and it goes away. But only for a time—until a new fear comes along. Then you start all over again."

I never had a chance to check on the accuracy of what he had said: by nature I am a sprinter, and I can't hold up for long distances.

One day I was complaining to a close friend about being summoned by the KGB. "You don't mean to tell me!" he said in exasperation. "Everybody gets those summonses—not just you. It's a condition of our existence. But you want to be different from everybody else."

Not so. It was just the other way around with me. I wanted to be like everybody else, but I thought that I was the only one to have had that kind of bad luck. I'm ashamed to admit this, but I began to look through my friends' address books on the sly. And in almost

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every one of them I found one or both of two familiar names: Boris Chudinov and Yury Vetrov. (Both were KGB agents assigned to work with writers and artists, and all my acquaintances, sad to say, were in that category.) Yet I still had the feeling that I was the only leper, despite the clear indications of an epidemic. The situation was similar to that described by Chesterton, but the number of KGB agents was not limited to the seven days of the week. To live in the Soviet Union means, inevitably, to collaborate with the KGB—whether as consultant, informer, or provocateur. The kind of luck this or that person has in so doing is another question.

It seems to me, therefore, that trying to guess how many people collaborate with the KGB is a waste of time. Obviously, the figure is not 100,000; and even more obviously, it is not 200,000. The KGB could not possibly cope with the population of the Soviet Union if it had so few collaborators. My advice to those people from the CIA, the State Department, and the White House who are making such guesses, is that they seek the answer in the latest census of the Soviet Union: the KGB's collaborators number about 270 million. I was one of them.

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Larry McCaffery

An Interview with Donald Barthelme

Donald Barthelme is the author of two novels, Snow White *(1967) and* The Dead Father *(1975); however, he is probably best known for his seven collections of short fictions, many of which individually appeared originally in the* New Yorker. *The collections were:* Come Back, Dr. Caligari *(1964);* Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts *(1968);* City Life *(1970);* Sadness *(1972);* Amateurs *(1976); and* Great Days *(1979). He also published* Guilty Pleasures *(nonfiction) in 1974.*

Larry McCaffery: You've published two novels, but most of your work has been in short fiction.

Donald Barthelme: Novels take me a long time; short fiction provides a kind of immediate gratification—the relationship of sketches to battle paintings. Over a period of years I can have a dozen bad ideas for novels, some of which I actually invest a certain amount of time in. Some of these false starts yield short pieces; most don't. The first story in *Sadness*—"La Critique de la Vie Quotidienne"—is salvage.

McCaffery: Do stories typically begin for you by landing on you, like the dog in "Falling Dog"?

Barthelme: Well, for about four days I've been writing what amounts to nonsense. And then suddenly I come across an interesting sentence—or at least interesting to me: "It is not clear that Arthur Byte was wearing his black corduroy suit when he set fire to the Yale Art and Architecture Building in the spring of 1968." I don't know what follows from this sentence; I'm hoping it may develop into something. I did know someone who was at Yale teaching in the architecture department at the time of that notorious fire; I'm not sure if the date was 1968, I'd have to check. I don't believe they ever found out who set it; I certainly have no idea. But I'm positing a someone and hoping that tragic additional material may accumulate around that sentence.

McCaffery: At the end of your story "Sentence," your narrator says that the sentence is "a structure to be treasured for its weaknesses,

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as opposed to the strength of stones." Am I right in assuming that one of the things that interests you most about the sentence as an object is precisely its "treasured weaknesses"?

Barthelme: I look for a particular kind of sentence, perhaps more often the awkward than the beautiful. A back-broken sentence is interesting. Any sentence that begins with the phrase, "It is not clear that. . . ," is clearly clumsy, but preparing itself for greatness of a kind. It's a way of backing into a story—of getting past the reader's hard-won armor. Then a process of accretion occurs, like barnacles growing on a wreck or a rock. I'd rather have a wreck than a ship that sails. Things attach themselves to wrecks; strange fish find your wreck or rock to be a good feeding ground. After a while you've got a situation with possibilities.

McCaffery: Have you ever studied philosophy of language in any kind of systematic way?

Barthelme: No. I spent two years in the Army in the middle of my undergraduate days at Houston. When I came back to the university, which must have been about 1955, there was a new man—Maurice Natanson—teaching a course titled "Sociology and Literature" that sounded good. I enrolled, and he talked about Kafka and Kleist and George Herbert Mead. I wasn't a particularly acute or productive student of philosophy, but in that and subsequent classes, I got acquainted with people Mauri was interested in: Husserl, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and company.

McCaffery: You were originally interested in journalism, weren't you?

Barthelme: It seemed clear that the way to become a writer was to go to work for a newspaper, as Hemingway had done—then, if you were lucky, you might write fiction. I don't think anybody believes that anymore. But I went to work for a newspaper while I was still a sophomore and went back to the newspaper when I got out of the Army. I was really very happy there—thought I was in high cotton.

McCaffery: By the late fifties, when you became editor of the *Forum*, you were obviously already interested a great deal in parody and satire as literary forms. What so attracted you to this type of writing?

Barthelme: People like S.J. Perelman and E.B. White—people who could do certain amazing things in prose. Perelman was the first true American surrealist—ranking with the best in the world surrealist movement—and West was another. Also, Wolcott Gibbs—

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all those *New Yorker* writers. And Hemingway as parodist, like in *The Torrents of Spring.*

McCaffery: Somewhere along the line you got involved as a director of an art museum. How did that come about?

Barthelme: A peculiar happenstance. I was entrusted with a small museum for a couple of years—the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston. They had just lost the director, didn't have a prospect, and I'd been on the board. They asked me to fill in temporarily, which I did for a while, and then they made me director—probably more fun than anything I've done before or since. For two years I mounted shows and developed programs in music, theater, and film. In consequence, I met Harold Rosenberg in 1962. At that time Harold had in mind starting a new magazine, which he and Thomas B. Hess would edit. They needed someone to be the managing editor—that is, someone to put out the magazine—and they hired me.

McCaffery: This was the now-legendary magazine, *Location*?

Barthelme: Yes. It was meant to be not just an art magazine, but an art-and-literary magazine. We were able to publish some wonderful material—some early Gass, some of John Ashbery's work, Kenneth Koch's stuff. It was supposed to be a quarterly, but in fact we published only two issues. Tom and Harold were not worried about putting the magazine out on time and certainly never put any pressure on me. We waited until we had enough decent stuff for a good issue. That experience was a great pleasure—listening to Tom and Harold talk. But getting back to the museum, it was a very small place. My responsiblity was to put some good shows together, mildly didactic, modestly informative. So I had to study quite a lot very fast to be able to do this—to make intelligent or useful shows. Luckily, I've always gotten along well with painters and sculptors, mostly by virtue of not asking the wrong questions of them.

McCaffery: It's been my experience that asking a painter what his work "means" is considered to be in bad taste. This seems to hold true for writers as well.

Barthelme: It's a separate study, "How to manifest intelligent sympathy while not saying very much." The early sixties were, as you know, an explosive period in American art, and I learned on the job, nervously. Just being in the studio teaches you something. I'll give you an example: when we were doing *Location* I went over to Rauschenberg's studio on lower Broadway with Rudy Burkhardt,

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the photographer, to take some pictures. Rauschenberg was doing silk-screen pieces, and the tonality of these things was gray—very, very gray. I looked out the windows and they were dirty, very much the tonality of the pictures. So I asked Rudy to get some shots of the windows, and we ran one of them with the paintings. They were very much New York lower Broadway windows. A footnote.

McCaffery: Your narrator in "See the Moon?" comments enviously at one point about the "fantastic metaphysical advantage" possessed by painters. What is he referring to?

Barthelme: The physicality of the medium—there's a physicality of color, of an object present before the spectator, which painters don't have to project by means of words. I can peel the label off that bottle of beer you're drinking and glue it to the canvas and it's there. This sort of thing is of course what Dos Passos did in the Newsreels, what Joyce did in various ways. I suppose the theater has the possibility of doing this in the most immediate way. I'm on the stage, and I suddenly climb down into the pit and kick you in the knee. That's not like writing about kicking you in the knee, it's not like painting you being kicked in the knee, because you have a pain in the knee. This sounds a bit aggressive, forgive me.

McCaffery: Another aspect of painting that seems relevant to your fiction is the surrealist practice of juxtaposing two elements—different sorts of language—for certain kinds of effects in fiction or poetry.

Barthelme: It's a principle of construction. This can be terribly easy and can become cheapo surrealism, mechanically linking contradictions. Take Duchamp's phrase, in reference to *The Bride and the Bachelors*, that the Bride "warmly refuses" her suitors. The phrase is very nice, but you can see how it could become a formula.

McCaffery: How do you avoid falling into this trap in your own work?

Barthelme: I think you stare at the sentence for a long time. The better elements are retained, and the worse fall out of the manuscript.

McCaffery: There is a tendency in the painting of this century to explore itself, its own medium—the nature of paint, colors, shapes, and lines, rather than attempting to reproduce or comment on something outside itself. This tendency seems relevant not only to your work, but also to that of several other important writers of the past fifteen years. Is this a fair analogy?

Barthelme: It is. I also think that painting—in the sixties but especially

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in the seventies—really pioneered for us all the things that it is not necessary to do. Under the aegis of exploring itself, exploring its own means or the medium, painting really did a lot of dumb things that showed poets and prose writers what might usefully not be done. I'm thinking mostly of conceptual art, which seems to me a bit sterile. Concrete poetry is an example of something that is, for me, not very nourishing, though it can be said to be explorative in the way that a lot of conceptual art is explorative. I can see why in some sense it had to be done. But perhaps not twice.

McCaffery: What about some of the "New-New-Novelists" in France—Pinget, Sollers, Baudry, LeClezio? They seem to be trying to push fiction to the same limits of abstraction that conceptual artists have pushed toward.

Barthelme: Of a work like Butor's *Mobile*, after a time there's nothing more you can say than "I like it" or "I don't like it"—the stupidest of comments. A more refined version is "I know this is good, but I still don't like it." And I think that this is a fair comment. There are more *récherché* examples of this kind of thing. *Triquarterly* did an issue a while back, entitled "In the Wake of the Wake," featuring several gallant Frenchmen whose work I'd seen in scattered places. The emphasis was towards "pure abstraction." For me this is a problem since they get further and further away from the common reader. I understand the impulse—towards the condition of music—but as a common reader I demand that this be done in masterly fashion or not at all. Mallarmé is perhaps the extreme, along with Gertrude Stein. I admire them both. But I don't have any great enthusiasm for fiction about fiction. Critics, of course, have been searching for a term that would describe fiction after the great period of modernism—"postmodernism," "metafiction," "surfiction," and "superfiction." The last two are terrible. I suppose "postmodernism" is the least ugly and most descriptive.

McCaffery: What do you think about Philip Roth's famous suggestion back in the early sixties that reality was outstripping fiction's ability to amaze us?

Barthelme: I do think something happened in fiction about that time but I'd locate it differently. I think writers got past being intimidated by Joyce. Maybe the reality that Roth was talking about was instrumental in this recognition, but I think people realized that one didn't have to repeat Joyce (if that were even

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possible), but could use aspects of his achievement.

McCaffery: One of your most evident abilities is your gift at mimicking a wide range of styles, jargons, and lingoes. Where do these voices come from?

Barthelme: I listen to people talk, and I read. I doubt that there has ever been more jargon and cant of various professions and semi-professions than there is today. I remember being amazed when I was in basic training, which was back in the early fifties, that people could make sentences in which the word *fucking* was used three times or even five times.

McCaffery: How did your relationship with the *New Yorker* begin?

Barthelme: I sent them something in the mail and they accepted it. Agented probably by a nine-cent stamp. Also, once in a while when I was low on cash I'd write something for certain strange magazines—the names I don't even remember. Names like *Dasher* and *Thug*. I do remember picking up five hundred bucks or something per piece. I did that a few times. Kind of gory, or even Gorey, fiction.

McCaffery: Have any of these things ever resurfaced?

Barthelme: No. Nor shall they ever.

McCaffery: It wasn't long before the *New Yorker* began publishing a story of yours almost every month. You didn't develop a specific understanding with them about regularly accepting your work?

Barthelme: I had moved to New York to work with Tom and Harold doing *Location*, and since I was only working half-time on the magazine, I had more time to write fiction. I had and have what they call a first-reading agreement.

McCaffery: Have you had a specific editor working with you at the *New Yorker*?

Barthelme: Yes, Roger Angell.

McCaffery: Do your stories usually require much in the way of editing?

Barthelme: Roger makes very few changes. If he and the magazine don't like a piece that I've written, they'll turn it down. The magazine sometimes turns down a piece I don't think should be turned down—but what else can I think? Roger is a wonderful editor, and if he objects to something in a story, he's probably right. He's very sensitive about the editing process, which makes it a pleasure.

McCaffery: Do you see yourself working out of some kind of *New Yorker* tradition?

Barthelme: The magazine in recent years has been very catholic. Any-

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body who publishes Singer, Merwin, Lem, Updike, Borges, and Marquez has got to be said to be various in terms of taste. Plus Grace Paley and Susan Sontag and Ann Beattie, and who knows who else.

McCaffery: I've noticed that in your last few books you seem to have dropped the interest in typographical or graphic play that was so evident in *City Life* and *Guilty Pleasures*. What got you interested in this sort of thing in the first place?

Barthelme: I think I was trying to be a painter, in some small way. Probably a yearning for something not properly the domain of writers. Maybe I was distracted by the things painters can do. I had an ambition toward something that maybe fiction can't do—an immediate impact—a beautifully realized whole that can be taken in at a glance and yet still be studied for a long time. Flannery O'Connor says, very sourly, very wittily, that she doesn't like anything that looks funny on the page. I know what she's talking about, but on the other hand, I'm intrigued by things that look funny on the page. But then there was the flood of concrete poetry, which devalued looking funny on the page.

McCaffery: I recall a comment of yours that you not only enjoyed doing layout work but that you could cheerfully become a typographer. Did you do all your own visual work?

Barthelme: They're mostly very simple collages, Ernst rather than Schwitters.

McCaffery: Have you tried your own hand at drawing?

Barthelme: Can't draw a lick.

McCaffery: At the end of the title story in *City Life*, Ramona comments about life's invitations "down many muddy roads" that she accepted: "What was the alternative?" I find a similar passivity in many of your characters—an inability to change their lot. Does this tendency spring from a personal sense of resignation about things or are you trying to suggest something more fundamental about modern man's relationship to the world?

Barthelme: The quotation you mention possibly has more to do with the great world than with me. In writing about the two girls in "City Life" who come to the city, I noticed that their choices, which seem to be infinite, are not so open-ended. I don't think this spirit of resignation, as you call it, has to do with any personal passivity; it's more a sociological observation. One attempts to write about the way contemporary life is lived by most people. In a more reportorial fiction, one would of necessity seek out more

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"active" protagonists—the mode requires it, in order to make the book or story work. In a mixed mode, some reportage and some play (which also makes its own observations), you might be relieved of this restriction. Contemporary life engenders, even enforces, passivity, as does television. Have you ever tried to reason with a Convenience Card money machine? Asked for napkin rings in an Amtrak snack-bar car? Of course you don't. Still, the horizon of memory enters in, you attempt to register change, the color of this moment as opposed to the past or what you know of it.

McCaffery: In *The Dead Father*, you deal with the notion that we're all dragging around behind us the corpses of our fathers, as well as the past in general.

Barthelme: Worse: dragging these *ahead* of us. I have several younger brothers, among them my brother Frederick, who is also a writer. After *The Dead Father* came out, he telephoned and said, "I'm working on a new novel." I said, "What's it called?" and he said, *"The Dead Brother."*

McCaffery: Was "A Manual for Sons" originally conceived as being a part of the novel? It seems like a marvellous set piece.

Barthelme: Originally it was distributed throughout the book as a kind of seasoning, but in time it became clear that it should be one long section. My German publisher, Siegfried Unseld, said rather sternly to me one evening, "Isn't this a digression?" I said, "Yes, it is." He was absolutely right, in technical terms.

McCaffery: In *The Dead Father*, and more recently in *Great Days*, you strip the narrative almost completely of the old-fashioned means of story development. In fact, by the time we get to the stories in *Great Days*, what we find are simply voices interacting with one another.

Barthelme: In *The Dead Father*, there are four or five passages in which the two principal women talk to each other, or talk *against* each other, or over each other's heads, or between each other's legs—passages which were possible because there is a fairly strong narrative line surrounding them. It's questionable whether such things can be made to fly without the support of a controlling narrative.

McCaffery: Was Beckett an influence in this recent form of experimentation?

Barthelme: Beckett has been a great influence, which I think is clear. But the effort is not to write like Beckett. You can't do Beckett all

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over again anymore than you can do Joyce again. That would waste everyone's time.

McCaffery: Have you ever tried writing poetry, as such?

Barthelme: No, too difficult. I can't do it. A very tough discipline, to be attempted by saints or Villons.

McCaffery: We've talked about the influence of painting on your work. What about the cinema?

Barthelme: I was bombarded with film from, let us say, my sixth year right up to yesterday, when I saw Wiseman's *Basic Training*. There has to have been an effect, including the effect of teaching me what waste is. As with painting, film has shown us what not to pursue. The movies provide a whole set of stock situations, emotions, and responses that can be played against. They inflect contemporary language, and one uses this.

McCaffery: Your fiction has often drawn materials from the realm of pop culture—Snow White, Batman, the Phantom of the Opera, King Kong, and so forth. What do you find useful in this kind of material?

Barthelme: Relatively few of my stories have to do with pop culture, a very small percentage, really. What's attractive about this kind of thing is the given—you have to do very little establishing, and can get right to the variations. The usefulness of the Snow White story is that everybody knows it, and it can be played against. The presence of the seven men made possible a "we" narration that offered some tactical opportunities—there's a sort of generalized narrator, a group spokesman who could be any one of the seven. Every small change in the story is momentous when everybody knows the story backwards; possibly I wasn't as bold in making these changes as I should have been.

McCaffery: It's very obvious in *Snow White*—and in nearly all your fiction—that you distrust the impulse to "go beneath the surface" of your characters and events.

Barthelme: If you mean doing psychological studies of some kind, no, I'm not so interested. "Going beneath the surface" has all sorts of positive-sounding associations, as if you were a Cousteau of the heart. I'm not sure there isn't just as much to be seen if you remain a student of the surfaces.

McCaffery: What function do the lists that appear in your work serve?

Barthelme: Litanies, incantations, have a certain richness per se. They also provide stability in what is often a volatile environment,

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something to tie onto, like an almanac or a telephone book. And discoveries—a list of meter maids in any given city will give you a Glory Hercules.

McCaffery: Who are some of the contemporary writers you find most interesting?

Barthelme: Along with the South Americans, who everyone agrees are doing very well, I think the Germans: Peter Handke, Max Frisch, certainly Grass, Thomas Bernhard, who did *Correction*. I think the Americans are doing very well. The French perhaps less so.

McCaffery: Raymond Federman says that while Samuel Beckett had devised a means of taking the world away from the contemporary writer, Garcia Marquez has shown writers a way to reconnect themselves with the world.

Barthelme: I don't agree with Ray that that's what Beckett has done; the Marquez portion of the comment seems more appropriate. I think they've both opened things up, in different ways. Marquez provided an answer to the question of what was possible after Beckett—not the only answer, but a large and significant one. Robert Coover, among American writers, seems to be doing something parallel, with good results.

McCaffery: Do you feel that New York City has helped shape your sensibility over the years?

Barthelme: I think my sensibility was pretty well put together before I came here. Although I've now lived here close to twenty years, I've also lived in other places in the meantime—Copenhagen for a year, Paris, Tokyo. I like cities. But this is a tiny corner of New York, very like a real *village* village. Once I was walking down Seventh Avenue with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, we'd just finished lunch, and we bumped into my daughter, who was then about eight. I introduced them, and she went home and told her mother she'd just met Hans Christian Andersen. And in a way she had.

McCaffery: Do you see any changes having taken place in your approach to writing over the past twenty years?

Barthelme: Certainly fewer jokes, perhaps fewer words.

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John Shea

THE LETTERS

Ma s' a conoscer la prima radice
del nostro amor tu hai cotanto affetto,
dirò come colui che piange e dice.

I

"I am almost mad with longing—desire—for you and I find that no day goes by without the thoughts of you filling my head. Like yesterday, I remember—actually, 'it comes to me' is more accurate—kissing you, tasting the taste—sorry, it's hard to come up with synonyms on the spot—of your lips, burying—I think—my face in your bosom. . . ." There was a slight pause; the pages rustled; he held them away and looked at them with a bemused expression. "Do you really want me to continue?"

"Yes, yes, don't stop now! I've just got to know what comes next," she said, rocking in the chair, her eyes bright.

"It seems somewhat personal, you know," he said, lifting an eyebrow. "I haven't looked further, but who knows how far it goes. Lips, bosom—one can imagine what comes next."

"Oh, I know what he's talking about. *You* know what he's talking about. I told you what happened, Terry, so you don't have to be embarrassed."

"Well," he said, glancing back at the letter again, letting his eyes drift over the tiny foreign-looking script with its full curves and determined tilt to the left of the page, "if *you're* not embarrassed." He found the spot where he had paused. "My face in your bosom, smelling your fragrant scent of womanhood . . . of everything that you meant to me, mean to me, that evening at the *pensione* after. . . . Some restaurant, I presume?" She nodded, her eyes closed. "You were who I had looked for all my life, and then like magic you were mine, my Beatrice, my Laura, all in one."

"Who?" asked Marie, looking up.

"Dante's girlfriend, and Petrarch's . . . although that's putting it rather crudely. This guy's some talker!"

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"He certainly is," she said with a smile. She drew her tanned legs up and arranged herself in a modified lotus position on the chair. Her white shorts were a fine contrast to the tawny smoothness of her skin. Her toes, so like the amiable little pigs of legend, wiggling in pleasure, had nails painted a glossy pink. Terry glanced at her face and shook his head.

"So we have you his Beatrice and his Laura, all in one. I suppose I would have added Sophia and Gina and Claudia . . . but perhaps that's just my less spiritual mentality. Anyway," he continued, scanning the letter, "he goes on about that evening, that evening, that evening! No more allusions, though, from what I can see. . . ."

"Read it all," she said in a whisper. "I want to picture him."

"In my dreams I had never imagined anyone so sweet, so . . . tender, so something something with an, a willingness to give. Here it gets a bit explicit, I'm afraid." She said nothing but sat perfectly still, listening with her eyes closed. Her lips were parted the briefest bit. To the casual observer, she could have been an Oriental sculpture, a cool alabaster personification of tranquil thought. But he was quite sure that her thoughts were anything but tranquil. "Your flesh touched mine, and the electricity of our meeting, encounter . . . was to me as a warning—no, that would change things—was like a . . . *avvertimento*, an announcement . . . of a new life. Oh my God, now it's *La Vita Nuova?* This guy's too much. Maybe he's cribbing."

"Fabrizio? Well, could be." She came to his defense, her eyes full on him now. "But if so, it's because it says what he wants to say. What was the name of it, Terry?" Her voice rose with the question, the notes dancing on the molecules of air, charging them, spinning with each word, dancing higher on the sound of his name.

"Another bit of Dante. What did you say this guy does, anyway?"

She laughed and shrugged, still balanced on the chair, one leg tucked under the other. "Signore Fabrizio, I'll have you know, is an architect. He told me all about Palladio and took me to see the best churches and palaces. . . . Unfortunately," she added, drawing out the word with a wry smile, "he is currently seeking a job."

Terry noted this bit of information without a visible reaction. Fabrizio Randazzo, architect. *Disoccupato*. Jobless. *Cercando lavoro*. Seeking a job. Best of references. I know la Signorina Marie Gardner, of the United States of America. Please, then, give me a job commensurate to my abilities and vision of beauty.

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Fabrizio Randazzo,
Architetto
Disoccupato.

It made a nice little jingle. But back to the letter and its flesh touching flesh, the tingling of meeting skin, burying one's face in her bosom, and so on. She still wanted to hear the rest of the letter, as presented by the master translator, Terrence Downs, linguist extraordinaire. More Italian for you: *traduttore, traditore.* Proceed. Modulate your voice accordingly. Capture the tone, tone which is everything. The words in Italian would probably convey the meaning to her. *La tua bellezza m'impazzisce, donna dal cielo, angela dei sogni!*

"Is there much more?"

"Just a little." He ran his finger down the last sheet, itself of foreign appearance, small, with small boxes, like a grid, not with the long casual horizontal lines of American paper. He certainly didn't rush out and buy himself some proper stationery for this transatlantic love correspondence! Barely worth a try? Does the appearance of the paper make a difference in the actual writing of the letter? Things to ponder.

"I must leave you now, my love, my treasure, for another day somethings and responsibilities are mine. But until we write again, I keep before me your face, your eyes glowing like the stars over Trastevere, your lips the red of cherries—nothing intrinsically Roman about that!—and . . . the pallor ghostly of your body when we first embraced in the . . . —what do you call it—twilight. I will write very soon again. With love, Fabrizio." He stopped, folded the letter carefully, and handed it to her. "And that is that."

She was silent. Her eyes did not meet his, but he could sense the sadness suffusing them, threatening to fill them with tears. This was worse than reading the spicy parts, he told himself, rising stiffly and pretending to look for something. When his little pantomime was done, he looked back at her and saw that the crisis had nearly passed. Her brow was smoothening again. She sighed and slipped a long loose curl behind her ear. When she leaned back and stretched, the letter held tightly in one hand, he could see the faint trace of her nipples under the shirt. Abruptly, he blushed, hoping that she had not noticed his intrusive if accidental stare. Damn that out-of-work architect, with his amorous missives! Who could sit here for half an hour and read such desperate romantic profusions aloud to their intended recipient—a beauty of the first order, to increase the diffi-

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culty—without an amorous thought of one's own slithering into the pristine garden of the mind unbidden? But that is that.

"Thanks, Terry," she was saying in a voice lacking all vitality. There was no dance, no joyful dizziness this time. "You were a doll. Thanks a lot."

She undid herself from her tyro's position and slowly extended her legs until they were parallel to the floor. The muscles tautened, the toes pointed: long, graceful dancer's legs. "It was nice to hear what it said, but . . . you know. It brings everything back. The good things. And a damn ocean between us."

With an appropriate look of sympathetic glumness, he watched as she wiggled her feet into the slack old pair of sandals: the pink little toes, so lusciously playing in formation. Then she snatched up her keychain and walked to the door. He followed her, hands in his pocket. "Thanks again, Terry. Sorry to bother you."

"No bother at all," he murmured. "Take it easy." She let herself out. After watching her walk down the hall towards her apartment for a moment or so, he closed the door and turned the lock. In the silence, the sound of the bolt pushing brusquely into place was strangely loud. Almost a full minute passed before he could think of what there was to do.

II

She had been the first neighbor to greet him when he had moved into the building, a graduate student largely unfamiliar with the city, having severed most previous ties. They had exchanged witticisms while waiting for the elevator, whose slow progress from floor to floor certainly provided sufficient time for such exchanges, if one wanted them. She had escorted him to the laundry room that first week, and he had gone to her, following respected tradition, for the cup of sugar he had unaccountably forgotten. But the rather dour-faced man he had seen her with at times seemed an indication of a commitment, or at least attachment, on her part; and perhaps she was a trifle too unintellectual for him to be worth any further pursuit. She laughed at his jokes while they waited for the elevator to groan to a halt, but she did not seem to catch all the allusions. At times she laughed because he obviously expected her to laugh. It would only have made things difficult to explain them. She laughed, and that was enough. It was nice to watch her laugh, although in

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describing how she looked at such time he wished vaguely for a phrase less clichéd than "her nose crinkled." But it did. And her laugh was just slightly too bold to be entirely ladylike: she laughed without self-consciousness. His graduate studies took up much of his time and much of his energy, so as the fall semester wore on he saw less of her, and found that he was accommodating himself to the fact quite well.

With the end of the school year, however, he had more time on his hands and more inclination to spend it frivolously: or better, in more directly pleasurable ways. In the back of his mind he remembered that he had not seen Mr. Dour around for a long while, but no doubt there were many eager substitutes. He was surprised but not really disappointed when she told him, as they passed in the lobby of the building, that she was going to Europe on vacation, for six weeks.

"When are you leaving?" he asked. She was struggling to hold on to a bag of groceries but seemed inclined to chat. He glanced from her eyes to the moist container of milk dangerously poised at the top of the bag.

"In three days. God, and here I am buying all this stuff. If I don't finish it all, do you want it?"

"Sure. You are most kind." He smiled ironically. "Where will you be—England, France, I suppose?"

"Yes, and Amsterdam . . . and Rome, for the longest time!"

"Ah ha! You're talking to a Roman of sorts right here, you know. I lived there for a while."

"No kidding. You lucky devil. I've been told it's a beautiful city. Ancient Rome, the Middle Ages, and so forth."

"You'll love it. My only regret is that I won't be able to accompany you and provide expert guidance, *senza onorario.*"

"What's that mean?" she asked, brightening at the foreign words, as if with a foretaste of delight.

"Without fee. I think. Do you speak any foreign languages?"

She shook her head. "Some French. You know, from high school. All about *ma tante* and *ça va bien, merci.* But you must know Italian," she said, her admiration evident.

He laughed. "I remember some of it, at least enough to read or understand decently, if it's said slowly enough. Maybe I should teach you a few important words and phrases."

"I know! They could come in handy. 'No thank you, sir, please take your hands off me or I will call the police.' Or 'Where can I cash my American Express checks?' And there are some others. . . ."

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"Give me a bit of time and I'll figure them out. But here's a word for you now: *caramella*. One of my favorites."

"Say it again?"

"*Caramella*. Ca-hra-*mel*-la! It means candy." She tried it, rushing past the foreign *r* and collapsing the two *l*'s into a single slack one. "Repeat: *caramella*. Linger over those *l*'s! Taste them!" She tried it once more, with a reasonable amount of success. "Excellent. Lesson one concluded."

"I've got to go. This milk seems to be leaking. But thanks. Maybe you could give me a list of good places to see." He nodded and watched her hurry past, her arms grappling with the bag that was rapidly losing its shape.

"And watch out for those Italian men," he called to her. She looked back, waiting for the elevator, and shook her head vigorously. Before it came, he left the building and headed toward the university campus.

III

She had revealed her plight soon after her return, on the whole still exhilarated, tanned perfectly from lazy hours on the Mediterranean beaches outside Rome where, she proudly told him, she had first met her dark Italian. Something had happened—love? at least that was what she felt—and for the next three weeks they were never apart. He was her guide, her chaperone, leading her through the chilly catacombs with the assurance of a Christian revenant, leading her through the awkward crowds of tourists who muddled and gawked in the sun-blessed piazzas, leading her to the choicest pieces of art, appreciated only by the cognoscenti whose ranks she was thrilled to join, if only for a brief time, leading her, with casual grace and unbuttoned shirt, to their regular table at Tempio di Bacco for the best lasagne—"green," she exclaimed—in the city. The three weeks had been filled to bursting with sights, moments, exciting bustle, perilous rides on his Vespa along the older, cobblestone streets, languorous days spent at the shore doing nothing more strenuous than chasing each other through the mild waves or tossing the mandatory, international Frisbee. But quickly, shockingly, it was gone. He had seen her off at Fiumicino Airport, his face drawn, his eyes dusky with sadness barely contained. As she trudged down

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the ramp, she took a final look and saw him standing stiffly behind the glass. The angle of the sun was bothersome; she took with her his slim form, his hands still by his side, a shimmer of afternoon light for a face.

"Well, why doesn't he come here for a visit?" asked Terry, watching her closely. That, he decided, was the first thing any dimwit would have said: a rock of support?

She shook her head. "He can't. There's just not enough money." She had pulled out a cigarette and seemed uncertain about what to do with it. Finally she threw it down on the coffee table with a grimace. "I'd given the damn things up . . . and now this! Terry, I don't know what to do. It can't end like this. We *had* something."

"I suppose you have to give it a chance. See if it survives. Look, you've only been back three days. See if you get a letter."

"I'd better," she said, arching a brow.

"Good. Take it from there." She began to laugh, not her usual full laugh but a paler, subdued version. "What's wrong?"

She shook her head again, still laughing. "A letter! What will I do with a letter? He barely knows English! I don't know any Italian except *Grazie*. When you're there in person it's different. You can get things across, there's feeling, you can express it with your look. . . ." She was toying with the cigarette again.

For a few moments he was silent, watching her and considering various bits of advice that he at once discarded for their triteness. The last thing she wanted to hear, no doubt, was a reminder of the soothing effect of time, or the surprising power of love. He looked away and gazed at the furniture. It was a small but comfortable and elegant room, its composure disturbed by the bulky leather suitcase still looming in the middle of the floor.

"I know I'm not making this all up," she said finally. "You can tell when it's right. But why in God's name did it have to be *Rome*? What happens *now*?"

"Well, don't worry too much about any letters. I can probably help there, if you'd like. I should be able to give you at least a general sense. . . . But that might get tricky." He gave a small smile. She was looking at him, her lips slightly parted, as if in thought.

"That would really be nice," she said. "If you could do it, Terry, I'd really appreciate it."

"You're sure you won't mind? After all, I'd be intruding."

"Look, you're a friend. And it would mean a lot to me."

The language of love. Dust off the dictionary. Keep a straight

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face. Love letters. Dearest Goddess, I. . . . What have I gotten myself into, he wondered. *Grazie.*

IV

So the first letter had come, only a few days after their conversation, and she had brought it over to be translated. The decoding was fairly easy: apparently lovers articulated the same universal thoughts, often in the same images and rhetoric. This Italian architect searching for a job, at any rate, expressed himself within the tradition. It was fairly easy, yes: but there was something peculiar about it. There were the same impassioned universal thoughts to be exchanged, but without him as intermediary they would not be spoken, would not be properly imparted. She held a letter in her hand full of the most earnest words, but without him it was only a silent symbol. And silent symbols, he observed, apparently did not carry the same weight as an open letter.

And it was indeed an open letter. How strange, he found himself thinking as he read to her the passions of a man he had never met, speaking as it were for him, bringing to life the indecipherable letters on the page. They were not two people discussing a lyric written, perhaps, for a lover in years past but now an object of dispassionate scrutiny. Here, as she sat alternately with eyes closed or peering with a kind of pained eagerness into his face—although, it seemed, not seeing *him*—there was little aesthetic distance. These words meant exactly what they said, and she to whom they were addressed, whom they were to enflame or soothe, was only a few feet away, a living, tangible presence. And they had their effect: she would smile, or lapse into a still sadness; a range of emotions, often in paradoxical combinations, could be seen, glimpsed, surmised, animating her face. While he spoke, weighing each word or phrase as it came, he tried to decide how he felt. "Your caress," he said, pausing to complete the sentence smoothly, "was like a paradise on earth, and I felt myself falling . . . happily, without question . . . into your enchantment, under your spell, I guess. How can I go on, here, alone, so many kilometers away . . . after having something . . . after having kissed your lips, touched your breasts, so like the peaches of . . . some place. I can't make it out." He took a quick look at her. She was quiet, head bowed. His uneasiness was keen: he had just openly described her bare breasts, to her, the woman sitting

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there, but it had not been him speaking. He read on, hearing his voice detail more intimacies, more recollections that could only stir the listener, mastering his tone, reading as from a text, but not as a stage actor: that would have been too much.

By the time of the third letter from Italy, he felt himself settled into a pattern of sorts: he was a voice, a disembodied voice articulating a stranger's passion, an instrument whose chief responsibility was to maintain an almost professional aloofness. He came to recognize the writer's style, even to anticipate what would be said. There was, of course, a certain amount of repetition; but such repetitions are not annoying to the lover's ear, are more like a litany, part of an eternal ritual. He spoke of the man's love, his loneliness, her vibrant being, her soft body, at all times careful never to speak in the voice of a lover.

The correspondence proceeded both ways. Trying to keep her writing as plain and patent as she could, she wrote back. But from the comments he made in return—half humorous, half serious—it seemed clear that he had struggled to extract a meaning from the English, had had to content himself with the general contours of its message. And indeed that there were letters in return was itself the most significant message. He apparently was more guarded and it seemed not to have occurred to him to show his lover's letters to somebody else, for similar elucidation. Perhaps it was pride, or a fervent belief in the sanctity of privacy. But she, more frank, less concerned with niceties than with coming as close as possible to direct contact, felt differently. When she came to Terry with a new proposal, however, he responded unenthusiastically.

"Don't you think that's going too far?" he said, almost exasperated. He folded his arms; it seemed a gesture of disapproval, and she looked away.

"You're right, I know you're right . . . but how do I get to him? He doesn't know what I write, not exactly, at any rate." Her face seemed, if only relatively, to have grown slightly haggard. Her eyes had lost some of their luster, her smile was sadder. But he found the change in her, to his own surprise, quite attractive. She seemed to have gained a new dimension, a fullness not previously there, or not as visible. She was, perhaps, more rooted in reality; drawn heavenward by love, yes, if one liked, but also to the earth. Still, as she sat in his kitchen, her keys on the table, leaning forward in her chair as if beseeching him for enlightenment, he could only feel a pang of anguish, a sense of his own helplessness. He did not want her to

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suffer. "How can I tell him how I feel, how I want to be with him? Now. Always."

He stood up and paced back and forth between the table and the refrigerator. "I could never write it for you." He shook his head. "Dictation? It's not that it would be like French class, but . . . there you'd be, spilling out your feelings, with *me* like an eavesdropper, a sneak, writing it all down." Bending to her, his hands trembling slightly on the tabletop, he looked into her eyes. "Look. I *know* you. I don't know him. There's a difference."

"I know, I know. You're right. It was a crazy idea. Crazy." She took a few moments to let a long sigh escape. "It's just that I feel so cut off, so helpless to do anything real. I sat there earlier, holding his letter—and it meant nothing to me. And I looked at what I had just written and knew it would mean nothing to him." Abruptly, she covered her face with her hands.

"It *does* mean something. Both of them do," he said quietly. He sat down again and waited for her to speak, or for something more momentous or apt to strike him. She looked so distraught.

"Terry, I'm so ashamed . . . so ashamed." She did not look up at him. Her voice was a whisper. "I can't believe I asked you to do it. It was selfish and. . . ."

"No, don't say that," he said, touching her shoulder. He wanted to give her a "big smile" when she pulled her hands away and looked dolefully at him, but he felt it would have been false. He would not pretend to have a solution. Instead, he tried to appear as steady and strong as a sympathetic friend, whatever *that* entailed. He sensed some confusion of his own. "He knows what you mean, even if he doesn't always know what you're saying."

He escorted her to the door. It was getting late, and the dishes from his hasty, unexciting meal were waiting unforgivingly in the sink. When she had gone, he told himself, he would turn back to his own minor headaches and minor joys. But without a word, as they stood for a moment at the door, she took his hand in both of hers—soft and cool—and pressed it. Then he was alone. But for the rest of the night his thoughts were of her.

V

He found himself being drawn more and more deeply into the affair. His own mundane existence of libraries and notes and pain-

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fully achieved attempts at prose began to seem less real to him than her situation, and receded completely at those times when she brought another letter for his magical services. It was apparent that she appreciated him, but as he translated yet another letter from the tireless stranger he wondered about his own feelings. The words he spoke, smoothly on the whole, haltingly at times, were beginning to exert a peculiar force on him. They were not his words, and yet he spoke them, addressed them to the young woman who waited so anxiously for them. They were the words of a lover, often desperate, urgent, yet he spoke them quietly, levelly. For all his efforts to remain apart, as well as one could, he was being drawn in. At times, aghast, he had to catch himself and force himself to return to his impersonal delivery. He did not know whether she noticed his rare slips or not. But something was happening, had been happening. All day he looked forward to the evening, to reading another man's words to her, to placing himself again in a rather embarrassing position. But there was something that overcame the embarrassment, or he would have stopped after the first letter. He came to a long complicated passage enumerating her qualities and sensed rather than saw her where she sat a few feet away, her gaze directed to the shaded window. How much longer can this go on, he thought.

"And what does all this mean, my enchantress, my beautiful one, but that I love you. I love you." He had finished. He dropped the letter in his lap and waited. And what does all this mean? All at once he was angry at the letter, annoyed by its pomposity, its endless rhetorical effects. The whole thing read like a passage from a bad sentimental novel, a sham. Who was this man without a face who wrote so grandly letter after letter, pouring his words out if not his heart, relying so complacently on another's voice? His jaw hardened but he said nothing.

"Thank you."

He looked up. She was gazing at him with a mild smile, perhaps a trifle embarrassed, perhaps also sensing a kind of overachievement, a strain, in the letter.

"Terry, I don't think I've really managed to thank you for all this. I know it's awkward, and it takes a lot of time . . . and I'd like to show my appreciation a bit better than just mumbling something and running back to my apartment. Would it be all right if I took you out to dinner this weekend? I've got a great place in mind. . . ."

He pursed his lips before replying. He was not feeling very amenable. Her offer was probably sincere, but who could tell? Was

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she just paying him off for his time? Bitter, but surprised by his reaction, he shook his head. "No thanks, Marie, really. It's not necessary."

"Are you sure? They make an incredible carrot cake. . . ."

"No. Don't feel you have to do anything like this."

She looked at him closely, her smile slowly fading. For a few seconds they said nothing. Then she slapped her thighs lightly and got up. "Well, let me know if you change your mind. You know the number."

Was there an archness to her tone, he thought, silent as he followed her to the door. He told himself he was not going to beg for dinner with her. He had better things to do: yes, that was the cliché, wasn't it?

"Damn it all," he said when he was alone again, "the hell with the whole damn thing. I sat there and I said I loved her. I gave her some buffoon's words. *Ti voglio bene. Ti amo.* What the hell does it mean? What do the insincere bleatings of an Italian playboy have to do with me?"

That night, sleep seemed never to come. An hour after turning the light off, he still lay and waited. Nothing. The radio, when he finally decided to try it, was little more than a minor distraction; or perhaps it was not enough of a distraction. His thoughts gradually turned from her face and the quiet way she sat while he read, to the letters themselves. Was it only his increasing lack of sympathy that caused him to detect a lack of conviction in them? The last one had seemed to incriminate itself and cast suspicion on certain parts of the earlier ones. Weeks had gone by; had the out-of-work architect lost some of his feeling for her? If so, why continue to write? Or was it all wishful thinking? He knew now that he hated the idea of expressing another man's love, of speaking for another. But it was not a simple matter of stopping: there was something compelling him to continue, to speak in the guise of another what he might not have been able to say otherwise. The truth left him almost dizzy on the bed, in the darkness; now it was out in the open. But she obviously loved the letter writer, not the translator. How could he continue in effect to champion a rival's cause? Perhaps she would not see him at all unless he participated in the whole awkward, complicated game. Perhaps the only way to see her, to remain on these rather problematic but intimate terms, was to serve as the intermediary. The situation seemed hopeless either way. As it was, however, he at least could express his feelings with impunity, as it were, from an inexhaustible

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if imperfect script. The troubling complexity of it all engaged him, kept him peering into the dark ceiling, until sleep took him with a suddenness he recognized only the next morning.

VI

He did not call her about the dinner invitation. He felt somehow he could not. Perhaps because she sensed a strain in their arrangement, it was late in the next week before they met again, and then it might have been by accident. At any rate, they found themselves in the lobby together, waiting for the elevator, waiting too for someone to introduce the subject that was on each of their minds. Finally, he decided to attempt it.

"Have you had any more letters?" He was careful to sound casual, but he felt his whole being crouched for a response. She had just gotten home from work and looked wonderful, and less vulnerable in her elegant suit and dark blue shoes.

"Oh, there are two of them," she said with a shrug. "I got one Saturday, and then one this morning."

"Well, aren't you somewhat curious about them?" he asked, smiling. "Or have you found someone else, a new translator? Someone in the Romance Languages Department?"

"No, no," she said. The elevator opened onto their floor and they got out. "I thought we could both use a rest. I felt things were getting . . . I don't know." They were walking down the hall. She seemed, he thought, to be wearing a perfume, a pleasant, vaguely familiar scent. Her shoulder-length dark blond hair had lightened in the summer sun, like that of so many of the television commercial manikins, but he knew she was not a soulless fabrication.

"Well, I'm still here. Do you want me to take a look at them?"

"That would be nice." For a second she seemed hesitant. Then, looking directly at him: "I was going to make some tea."

"Darjeeling?"

"Yes."

"You're on, if I read you correctly," he said.

The session, if it could be so called, went smoothly, at least on the surface. His resentment smoldered, though, and he had difficulty in keeping the skepticism out of his voice as he read two or three grandiloquent passages. A note of stridency seemed to have entered the letters: why had she left him, when was she returning,

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why did he continue to torment himself and pour his soul into words? He wanted very much to come to America to see her, but money was short. Life was so unfair, especially to young lovers. Reading, he paused momentarily and looked up from the letter. She was curled on the sofa, her face turned away but still apparently listening intently. She had left her tea unfinished. One shoe was barely visible under the sofa, on its side. "This is getting interesting," he thought, scanning the rest of the letter. "Perhaps I was right about this guy." What followed was a delicate suggestion that she help him "to fulfill his dream to come to America," that is, scrape up fare for the plane ride. Love, it seemed, had to move over and share the stage with Money. How much had she spent during those three weeks of dining and traveling and barhopping? He wanted to know but there was no tactful way to ask her. Did she at least sense the desperation, the change of tone, of the letter?

The second and more recent was briefer and it seemed to him even more suspect. But how could he interfere, how could he judge, especially given his own far-from-disinterested position? The submerged plea for money was there again; this time even a figure was named, not very large in itself but perhaps only a test of some sort. As he read the passage aloud he felt an almost physical distaste and hoped that the heat on his face was not turning to a blush. These were words he was glad to hear coming from his rival, but there was little pleasure in voicing them. How would she respond? When the letter was over he kept his eyes on the floor.

"Is that everything?" she asked after a short pause. Her voice seemed husky, charged with emotion.

He took a quick look at her, trying to gauge her feelings. The letter had ended so abruptly, with little attempt to recreate the earlier atmosphere of impassioned longing. Instead it was almost matter-of-fact. The longer he hesitated the more uncomfortable the silence became. What if she began to cry?

"No, wait—I must have missed this little bit here." He did not look at her. His voice was neutral. "I don't see how I can live without you, without seeing you every day. Only you can make my life seem worthwhile."

At this she glanced at him, her eyes half questioning. He felt his throat growing dry. "Well, I've got to get back to the books, Marie. Thanks for the tea." Folding the letter with excessive deliberation, he rose and picked up his notebook. Out of the corner of his eye he could see her still looking at him. All at once he knew he had to get

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out of her presence before something happened. But he still had to see her. "Why don't you stop by tomorrow for tea at my place? I shall reciprocate. We shall be quite civilized."

She smiled. "Quite civilized. Why not?"

VII

The next letter confirmed his suspicions. There was an accusing tone throughout much of it. Petulantly, the letter demanded a swift reply, some favorable word that would "surely give me a reason to hope, me who sees you always in his thoughts and has no rest." But how would he survive, how could their exquisite love go on? She was so far away, and would not return to him; would she at least offer him the chance to come to her? "I write and wait days and days . . . and nothing comes but . . ." (he had to look up the word and improvise) "blandnesses. How can I go on this way? Please, please, give me hope. You, you have comfort and security. But I, I have the knowledge of sadness and discomfort." Again, less subtle than before, came the suggestion that she send some money. It was difficult to read it and his voice trailed off. Now she was looking at him. How could he diffuse the pain that she had to be feeling?

"My words lack the power of telling you how much I love you. Your presence haunts me throughout the whole day. I want to press you close to me, touch your hair, kiss you, make the night pass us by so softly and the morning find us in one another's arms. But all I can do is dream . . . for there is this . . . ocean between us." He sensed her gaze on him and he did not look up. The letter had ended but he had gone on, had told her what he felt. And now was the time to tell her that he had spoken at last for himself; there were no words on a page to guide him.

But he could not speak. She was not his. She had given herself to somebody else, they were meeting on clearly defined terms, and his love for her was inadmissible. He would be a sneak to deceive her and try to steal her away; all the earlier meetings would seem a cynical ruse to trap her, a pretense of friendship and assistance but actually something else. He wanted to take advantage of the writer's apparent wavering, but he could not. Even if the Italian was losing his ardor, or perhaps losing his patience and facility, she gave no sign of losing hers. No, it was not time. But how long could it all go on?

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"He seems . . . anxious, terribly anxious," she said quietly, toying with the corner of the folded letter. "I wish I could do something. I can only send him my love, but that . . . doesn't seem enough."

Let the bastard get a job and earn his way here, he thought glibly, unconcerned by his lack of generosity. He closed his eyes for a moment. Something would have to happen soon.

She wrote back almost at once, but her reply was obviously inadequate. Did she not love him? Had her love gone? Was she going to let him die here, all alone, without her sunshine? He would love very much to come to visit, but how? He needed her help. He needed her help. He needed her help. Now.

The letter, short and almost totally given over to such sentiments, left her crying, her head bowed. Quickly, torn by the sight, he invented another brief ending. "Your love sustains me. I know I could not go on living without it, without the thought of you. . . . That's about it. It's a fairly short one this time. Marie?" She did not look up. "Is there anything I can do? Some tea? Vodka?" When she shook her head, he got up quietly. All he had to do was kneel beside her and put his arms around her and tell her the truth. But again he felt like a deceiver and an opportunist. "Give me a ring if there's anything you need, all right?" As he left the apartment, the scene vivid in his mind, he promised himself that he would not read another letter to her. Before he reached his own door, he knew he would be too weak to refuse.

He felt full of a nervous, aching energy. He could not think clearly, did not know what to do. He paced. He tried to read, but soon tossed the book aside. He performed climactic scenes in his head, in which he would finally be able to speak; the letters would be torn and strewn about the room, and a new life would begin for the two of them. But nothing helped to calm him. He moved restlessly, much too abruptly and awkwardly, and there was nowhere in the apartment to go. Always he returned to a motionless frustration. For a minute he contemplated the telephone. All he had to do was dial her number . . . and she would hear his voice, the same voice that had spoken for someone else for so long, for so long that perhaps it was no longer his. This is Terry, he would say; but it would be Fabrizio Randazzo speaking, miraculously: he had come, he had made the trip, everything would be fine now.

He jumped to his feet and charged into the kitchen. He threw open the refrigerator and groped for a can of beer. Then he pulled the rest of the cans out as well, dangling four from the plastic strip.

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VIII

Three days later, days in which he had tried to work and had not seen her, not daring yet to face her, he was walking home after the library had closed for the night. The long walk through campus to his apartment building in the more residential area was always a time for reflection; the words from the books would settle, and his mind would play over them, organizing, harnessing, synthesizing. But tonight, as so often recently, the crisp creamy pages of the old journals quickly receded and he found himself thinking about Marie, her deep eyes, her cheek, how comforting it would be to touch. The streetlights glowered, turning the sidewalks into blurred grey streams. His feet moved. The landmarks of the walk went by scarcely noticed. There was a faint breeze, merciful summer gift from somewhere, and he savored it on his face when he turned at the usual corner. Overhead, the moon's wan glow was too weak to pierce the foliage of the trees. This street was always the darkest. His *selva oscura*. Obscure. Only a few more blocks. One thing he had determined: he was going to burn his damn Italian dictionary and scatter the ashes out the window. *Tesoro mio* would be blown east, *il mio cuore sofferente* west, and all the other simpering phrases. . . .

What would it be like to stop at her door and knock? She would come to answer, possibly aroused from sleep, eyes weary, marked with the familiar melancholy, growing wider, wary, as he intrudes. Or was that the word: enters? But she has not invited him. She steps back and looks at him, and is suddenly conscious of her dishabille. Or shall we be consistent here: her *disabbigliatura*, her *disabbigliamento*. Is there such a word? We decree that there is. She steps back. Her feet, one notices, are bare, with the same pink polish on the toenails. "Terry! It's rather late, isn't it?" But tonight I am a lunatic, I have surrendered willingly to the moon's influence; it has whispered and insinuated the whole walk home, thief to thief, and here I am. But my dear, did you not expect me? It is I, me. Will you not ask me to speak for myself? I have left the script home. Let us improvise. Let us do something about your dishabille. *Magari*. Shall I steal a kiss? Taste your naked shoulder, gleaming immaculately under the electric light? Utter the emotive words, not read them? As she retreats a few more steps, she is confused but thoughtful, perhaps with a dawning approval. "Terry, you seem . . . different."

The next corner to turn was approaching. For a few moments he kept his gaze on the sidewalk and listened to the quiet scrape of his shoes, steadily covering the ground to the presumed destination.

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He sighed and switched his books to the other hand. Someone was walking the other way across the street, too far from the streetlight to be seen clearly. He passed a storefront on the corner of his block and paused to look within. The stacks of groceries were dark, the aisles empty and still, the blustery claims on each box now silent: a shop long after hours was always macabre. His vision withdrew and he found himself considering his reflection in the glass, the form barely visible, the face dusky. Was he presentable, he wondered. But it could have been anyone.

When he got off the elevator he looked down the hall but, as he expected, there was nothing to see. It took several seconds to unlock the door, so unsteady was his hand. There was a note on the floor. It had to be from her, he thought, but then remembered that the active tenants' association was constantly demanding meetings and contributions. When he picked it up, however, he saw her handwriting: graceful, legible, conspicuously American, not at all like Fabrizio's. There was so much that could have been written, from the most curt dismissal to the warmest invitation; but there was only a brief, neutral message: "Stopped by this evening. Marie." His disappointment was only momentary. That could not be it; there had to be an underlying meaning, something to call into play his ingenuity and his imagination. The words were only superficial, the barest shorthand suggestion of the reality, like remarks banal in themselves without the proper context. "Stopped by." The plainest English.

As he sat in the kitchen, sipping juice, he wondered what to do. It was nearly eleven thirty. But was the note a call to action, a proposal to redefine roles? It was important to interpret correctly, but no impulse came to him with the unmistakable blaze of a mandate and he sat for ten minutes, indecisive. He watched the second hand on the clock race in its endless circuit past the numerals until he could no longer tolerate it. His face felt hot. In the bathroom he watched his hands cup the water, something they had done so often without notice. He splashed his face and felt somewhat better. The mirror's presence was intimidating. Finally he looked directly into it: the eyes were red, the face tense. *Sono io.* It is I. You look like one of the undead. Cheer up, son. When he smiled the sight was not reassuring. *Sono io.* He dried his face and hands and switched the light off. For a moment he stood still and gazed into the dark mirror, seeing little except the sharp-edged doorway behind him. He felt his pulse keenly. Slowly he unbuttoned the top two buttons of his shirt, then turned and made his way back to the front door. He began to walk down the hall.

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Mark Shechner

PAPA

Not long before he died, Ernest Hemingway wrote to one of his literary executors, "It is my wish that none of the letters written by me during my lifetime shall be published. Accordingly, I hereby request and direct you not to publish or consent to the publication by others, of any such letters." That should have been enough to stay the hand of those biographers and publishers avid, like fight promoters, to get one last payday out of the ex-champ, no matter what the cost. Mary Hemingway, to her credit, held out against Carlos Baker and the Scribner Hemingway industry for eighteen years after her husband's death in 1961. To her discredit, she finally did cave in and authorize publication of a book that is both dishonorable and damaging.* The dishonor lies in the violation of Hemingway's wishes in the name of some higher claim, some fanciful version of the advancement of learning that Baker calls "the continuing investigation of the life and achievements of one of the giants of twentieth-century literature." In plain words, more gargoyles for the mausoleum. Yet to read these letters is to recognize immediately why Hemingway wanted them kept out of the marketplace, for they place on view in the most vivid fashion all that was most unsavory in the man's private character. The damage done here is not to the man or the "legend"—which can matter only to those who insist that exemplary writers be also exemplary human beings—but to those books that we once read in such total confidence as documents of life "in our time." Such raw encounters with the man as these letters afford undermine the authority of the books and put the "continuing investigation" of them on a more slippery footing, one informed by suspicion and distaste. It is an advance of sorts, but in the direction of substituting an author's life for his books and confusing a biography for a career. It is one of the unsettling side effects of bringing a writer's life into sharper focus that his writing may become, in the process, more remote.

Ernest Hemingway was a barbarian. That has never been precisely a secret, and yet we've always found chasers to help us down

*_Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961._ Edited by Carlos Baker. Charles Scribner's Sons. $27.50

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the bitter facts: Hemingway's precise, Spartan prose, his athlete's physique and actor's good looks, his independence, his Paul Bunyan feats of courage and endurance. These qualities, all admirable in themselves, made it easy for us in the past to mistake him for something familiar and reassuring: an engaging roughneck, a devil-may-care adventurer, an American sportsman. Students of literature, who have been trained to take fine writing as sufficient proof of grace, have been most susceptible to Papalotry, the admiration beyond reason of Papa Hemingway. They—we—bridle at the suggestion that someone who writes like an angel may be beyond forgiveness as a man, which is why the Modern Language Association, with its doctrine of salvation through good words, sometimes strikes us as a Protestant sect. That art redeems the artist is an axiom of our literary culture, turning biographers into disciples and giving us such kid-glove treatments of our writers as Carlos Baker's *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* and, now, his introduction to these letters:

> It is probable that his shortcomings, which were real, undeniable, and in fact not denied even by himself, were balanced by qualities that more than tipped the scales in his favor. Among his virtues must be named his lifelong perseverance and determination in the use and development of his gifts, his integrity as an artist, his unremitting reverence for the craft he practiced, and his persistent love of excellence, whether in his own work or that of others.

Observe closely the proposition: that Hemingway the man had his "shortcomings," but that a "reverence for the craft he practiced" absolved him of them, "tipped the scales" in his favor. Indeed, if you lose sight of the critic's thumb as the scales tip over toward "innocent," you've missed the first trick of Papalotry—of all literary sanctification for that matter—the confusion of realms that allows skill and perseverance in writing to be evidence of personal moral standing.

The letters, however, are strong medicine for all but the most practiced Papaloter, and the balances and mitigations customarily called forth in Hemingway's behalf will not sweeten them. They portray him as a tiresome braggart, a malicious adversary who heaped scorn on nearly everyone he knew, a racist and anti-Semite, and a shallow and boring correspondent who wrote many of his letters—maybe most of them—when too drunk to write fiction. But first and last they show him as a killer who would catch or drop

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anything that ventured into the crosshairs of his scope or came within scent of his fishing lures: deer, bear, elk, antelope, tarpon, marlin, lion, pheasant, magpie, you name it. If it had fur, feathers, or scales, Hemingway killed it. The final body count must certainly have run into the tens of thousands, including by his estimate 122 men, 122 "sures" as he called them, taken in battle some time during the three wars he took part in as an ambulance driver and correspondent, without question a world's record for unarmed non-combatants. Ernest Hemingway was the exterminating angel himself, and in taking his own life with a shotgun in 1961 he was obeying the fundamental premise of his being: *life is there to be taken.*

If we have not been overly disturbed by this before, we needn't blame Hemingway. He did everything he could to let us know what sort of man he was, and could not have been more blunt about it than in his book about bullfighting, *Death in the Afternoon.*

> Killing cleanly and in a way which gives you esthetic pride and pleasure has always been one of the greatest enjoyments of a part of the human race. . . .One of its greatest pleasures . . . is the feeling of rebellion against death which comes from its administering. Once you accept the rule of death, thou shalt not kill is an easily and a naturally obeyed commandment. But when a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the godlike attributes: that of giving it. This is one of the most profound feelings in those men who enjoy killing.

Hemingway lived to kill, and the techniques he found esthetically satisfying, those demonstrations of courage and grace under pressure that quicken the heart of the aficionado, were, his protestations aside, strictly luxuries. He'd as soon shoot prairie dogs from a car or machine gun sharks from his boat as run with the bulls in Pamplona or practice jabs, hooks, and uppercuts on some hapless fellow writer in a bar. On the subject of his profoundest expertise, the world took him at his word, that he was a quality man, an authority on the finer points of killing. But in his private correspondence he comes across unambiguously as a quantity man, who took exceptional delight in toting up the score.

> Charles shot a bull elk, we shot one together, and I killed one alone. He killed 2 damned fine bucks and a bear and I killed an eagle (flying), trapped a coyote and killed a hell of a big bear.

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> In April went to Cuba for 10 days and stayed 65—caught 32 swordfish—learned a lot about Cuba.
>
> Last month caught 18 good dolphin, 5 good wahoos, 6 kingfish (one 54 lbs), a 48-pound snapper, and 7 marlin.

Hemingway's famed precision was never more punctilious than in tabulating the day's slaughter, and there is scarcely anything more repellent in these letters than his repeated self-congratulation over his 122 "sures," which, presumably, were bagged during a brief few months of active combat in 1944. During the Second World War, while attached as a correspondent to Colonel "Buck" Lanham's regiment of the 4th Infantry Division, Hemingway was usually armed to the teeth, for which the Army once nearly sent him packing for violating the Geneva Convention. His correspondent's quarters resembled a munitions dump, and he himself was often to be found in the thick of battle. At one point he even took command of a ragtag band of French resistance fighters, with whom he liberated a number of Paris bistros on August 25. Colonel Lanham held him in high esteem as a fighting man and paid him the compliment (or so Hemingway took it) of calling him the most ruthless man he had ever known. It was some time around the liberation of Paris in 1944 that Hemingway killed his 122 "Krauts," among them, he boasted to Charles Scribner several years later, an SS officer who had been taken captive.

> One time I killed a very snotty SS kraut who, when I told him I would kill him unless he revealed what his escape route signs were said: You will not kill me, the kraut stated. Because you are afraid to and because you are a race of mongrel degenerates. Besides it is against the Geneva Convention.
>
> What a mistake you made, brother, I told him and shot him three times in the belly fast and then, when he went down on his knees, shot him on the topside so his brain came out of his mouth or I guess it was his nose.
>
> The next SS I interrogated talked wonderfully.

The story is told with alarming violence. Hemingway was not just relating a grisly wartime experience; he was issuing a warning that Scribner was expected to pass on to others: don't fuck with Papa. The racial note here is unmistakable; his contempt for the snotty SS Kraut was one with his omnibus contempt for all lesser

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breeds without the law. The story may be fictitious—Hemingway was a notorious fabricator of exploits—but the rage was authentic, and the entire letter to which the murder story belongs is thick with fury. Goaded to anger by a reporter from *McCall's* who was seeking to interview members of his family, Hemingway threatened to cut off his mother's allowance should she consent to talk. "I hate her guts and she hates mine," he added, and as for the reporter, "Please give that woman such a throw out that she will think twice before she comes down to the whore's end of our bar again." Strong stuff.

One is constantly brought up short by Hemingway's anger and the callow social attitudes in which it commonly found expression. "Boid," he wrote to his old boyhood chum William Smith, in the goony frathouse lingo he affected with his hunting and fishing buddies, "the number of genuwind all Caucasian white guys in the world is limited. I should say that maybe there were 5 or 6 at the most. . . . Ther'd probably be a number more if they didn't marry foecal matter in various forms." "You heard of course," he wrote to Pound, who could be counted upon to sympathize, "of Steffens marriage to a 19 year old Bloomsbury kike intellectual." Elsewhere, "Mason has kiked me so on money that I can't afford taxis." Michael Arlen, whose writing had been likened to Hemingway's, was "some little Armenian sucker after London names"; Samuel Roth's pirating of Joyce's *Ulysses* "does not make one love the Jews any better." In one letter, he elaborated for the benefit of John Dos Passos a fantasy of seizing Key West for a private plantation to be called Southwestern Island Republic. "Am at work on a project to re-enslave the jigs overnight and am fixing up accomodations in the carferries to run chinamen."

> On the first night we massacre the catholics and the jews. The second the protestants who have been lulled into a false sense of security by the events of the first evening. The third night we butcher the free thinkers, the athiests, communists and members of the lighthouse service. The fourth day we fish the gulf and capture another ship to feed our faithful jigs.

To Maxwell Perkins, who complained of the portrait of Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises,* he snorted, "And why not make a Jew a bounder in literature as well as in life? Do jews always have to be so splendid in writing?"

All this sounds depressingly familiar. So many of Hemingway's

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contemporaries took the literary life for a sanctuary of the socially privileged that their art in certain tangents sounded like a school of racial contempt. Eliot's Jew, the landlord, squatted on the window sill in "Gerontion," while Pound's captains of usura (Canto XLV) were off slaying the child in the womb, bringing palsey to bed, and generally playing havoc "CONTRA NATURAM." Pound, of course, parlayed his generation's most bankrupt sentiments to their most desperate conclusion in his wartime radio broadcasts for Fascist Italy, though it is not Pound whom Hemingway most resembled in his social prejudices, but Eliot. Pound's anti-Semitism was something of a harebrained radicalism crossed by poetic fever. It was enriched with ideas about banking and credit, Jefferson and Confucius, and God knows what. It aspired to be a profound social idea. Hemingway's anti-Semitism, like Eliot's, was just old-fashioned midwestern Anglo-Saxon snobbery, the snobbery of proper birth, proper schooling, and proper know-how. The properly schooled white guy was one who knew how to bait a hook, tie a fly, slip a punch, load his own ammo, and mix a damn fine martini ("just enough vermouth to cover the bottom of the glass, ounce 3/4 of gin, and the spanish cocktail onions very crisp and also 15 degrees below zero when they go in the glass"). It was not without cause that Matthew Arnold called the English aristocracy "the barbarians" and described their totems as a passion for field sports, the care of the body, and the cultivation of manly exercises, good looks, and fine complexion. Hemingway's personal culture, it is plain, was bred in the bone by generations of barbarians who worshipped the twin gods of Manly Vigor and Savoir Faire.

It took the war and the example of Pound finally to purge Hemingway of his anti-Semitism, and after 1945 the more malignant of his bigotries slipped quietly away. He was being absolutely sincere when he wrote to Robert Frost in 1957 that he detested Pound's politics, his anti-Semitism, and his racism. He even struck up, late in life, a warm friendship with Bernard Berenson, whom he eventually addressed as "my brother, my father, my HERO." Make of that what you will. Hemingway was never to be free of his rage, but the war taught him to parcel it out in a more democratic fashion and to detest men for themselves alone.

It is generally conceded that Hemingway's career divides sharply in two: the first part comprising the two early novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, and two volumes of stories, *In Our Time* and *Men Without Women*; the second consisting of all subsequent writing, with exemptions granted to a few later stories

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("The Snows of Kilimanjaro") and, with some reluctance, to *The Old Man and the Sea*. In other words, by the 1930s and Hemingway's own thirties—he was born in 1899—the freshness and vitality that had made him the bright star among the American expatriates in Paris had begun to deliquesce into the vanity and bluster of the later books, starting with *Death in the Afternoon* ("bull in the afternoon," said Max Eastman) and rising to intolerable crescendos in *Across the River and Into the Trees* and the posthumously published *Islands in the Stream.*

The usual interpretation credits this deterioration to Hemingway's own befuddlement, his yielding up his gifts to his own heroic mythos of potency, courage, and action, until he lost entirely the ability to tell the difference between the sporting life and the life of the mind. There is truth in that: the later books are patently the work of a damaged and perplexed man who had lost beyond retrieval the self-possession of youth. But the letters also show us something quite unexpected: that the swaggering, vainglorious sportsman photographed with his marlin in Key West, his lion in the Serengeti, his elk in Wyoming— invariably beaming at the camera as if to say, "Here, I've just brought down the unconscious itself"—was there from the start, and that the early achievements of poise and grace in writing and the social ethic of *non serviam* were won against great personal odds. At the very height of his success in the mid-1920s, Hemingway could be as tedious, gauche, and maudlin as a college boy on a summer tour of the cafés and Bierstuben of Europe. "I guess this is a lousy snooty letter," he wrote to Sherwood Anderson, apologizing for his parody of Anderson in *The Torrents of Spring,* "and it will seem like a lousy snooty book. That wasn't the way I wanted this letter to be—nor the book."

> It looks, of course, as though I were lining up on the side of the smart jews like Ben Hecht and those other morning glories and that because you had always been swell to me and helped like the devil on the In our time I felt an irresistable need to push you in the face with true writer's gratitude. But what I would like you to know, and of course that sounds like bragging, is—oh hell, I can't say that either.

To Bill Smith:

> Sure I know how you felt when you indited that screed and I had made a more than offensive bludy ass of myself with Y.K. but Doodles had my goat and a goatless male ain't renowned for sound and noble actions. To hell with all that.

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To Harold Loeb, the model for Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises:*

> I was terribly tight and nasty to you last night and I dont want you to go away with that nasty insulting lousiness as the last thing of the fiestas. I wish I could wipe out all the mean-ness and I suppose I cant but this is to let you know that I'm thoroly ashamed of the way I acted and the stinking, unjust uncalled for things I said.

Sure we know what some of those things were. To Pauline Pfeiffer, for whom he was about to leave his first wife, Hadley, he wrote a letter that took leave of grammar altogether:

> All I can think is that you that are all I have and that I love more than all that is and have given up everything for and betrayed everything for and killed off everything for are being destroyed and your nerves and your spirit broken all the time day and night and that I can't do anything about it because you won't let me.
>
> So I know this is a lousy terribly cheap self pitying letter just wallowing in bathos etc. etc. etc. and etc. and so it is. O Christ I feel terribly.

And to Scott Fitzgerald:

> If this is a dull shitty letter it is only because I felt so bad that you were feeling low—am so damned fond of you and whenever you try to tell anybody anything about working or "life" it is always bloody platitudes—

The dull shitty letters follow one after the other, without an idea, a fresh image, or an insight that is not a platitude. One looks in vain for the celebrated author of *The Sun Also Rises*, of "Big Two-Hearted River," of the Nick Adams who, propped against the church wall, a bullet in his spine, speaks to a dying Italian, "Senta Rinaldi. Senta. You and me we've made a separate peace." One finds instead just this tiresome young man practicing every day to become a legend and a bore, and signing himself Papa at the age of twenty-eight.

What are we to make of this? Malcolm Cowley once proposed the mystical Jungian idea of the "shadow side" of the personality to explain Hemingway's inconsistencies, and mystical explanations are as good as any when the subject is something as obscure as a man's relation to his art. What is apparent is that Hemingway was able at first to divide up his life in such a way as to exclude all that was soft in his character from his writing, and permit only a wiser, more

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disciplined version of himself, Jake Barnes or Nick Adams, access to print. The writing, it is curious to observe, matured separately from the man. And just as the callow, self-inflating side of Hemingway was prevented at first from spilling over into his work, so the sensibility that had taken the measure of modern warfare and the cruelties of life "in our time" with such keen assurance was not to be found in Hemingway's social relations. The young Hemingway in his letters consistently played the *faux naif*, and it is painful to observe this young man, the toast of the literary world and the inventor, while yet in his twenties, of an entire modern idiom for American writing, acting the fool for wives, lovers, fellow writers, and old fishing cronies.

The answer may be nothing more complicated than a case of Hemingway drunk and Hemingway sober, a distinction that would be most sharply drawn in the 1920s, before the onset of the long stupor of the banquet and safari years. Hemingway consumed prodigious amounts of alcohol, first as a discipline of manhood, later as a way of life. Yet nowhere in the many memoirs of Hemingway is he spoken of as an alcoholic. Maybe that is because he always left the bar under his own power or had the constitution and temperament to cover the effects of his drinking with exploits, rather than tears and recriminations in the manner of Scott Fitzgerald and Harold Stearns. (Passersby in Paris, seeing Stearns sprawled in some doorway, were said to remark, "There lies civilization in the United States.") I find it hard to imagine that Hemingway drank less than they; he was simply built to drink as they were not, and suffered the illusion that he was the better man for it. Here, at least, bravado and self-command served him badly. The manly art of holding your liquor is no favor to the shell-shocked tissues of the brain that care nothing for courage, only for oxygen.

I can think of no other American writer whose presence *as a writer* was so overwhelmingly physical. Normal Mailer has tried with moderate success to emulate Hemingway's compulsive masculinity, but he never produced a prose that was of itself symbolic of muscularity and power. Hemingway treated writing as an athletic event as, to a degree, it is for all writers. There are distinct writers' equivalents to being in shape, to warming up, to being up on your toes or back on your heels, at the peak of your game or over the hill. There were qualities in Hemingway's early writing suggestive of agility, footspeed, and economy of effort that were clearly symbolic of a young man's confidence in his reflexes and strength. Later, the

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prose grew fat and cruel like the man, lunging, stabbing, and making up in sheer force what it had lost in balance. Hemingway was not just aggrandizing an inflated ego in applying sports metaphors to writing (Eliot, we learn, couldn't hit the ball out of the infield; Faulkner overmatched himself in going up against Dostoyevsky the first time out); he spoke from firsthand knowledge that writing well was no less a discipline of the body than boxing or bullfighting. His error lay in not taking those metaphors seriously enough and failing to keep himself in top condition. He dissipated, and every book after *Death in the Afternoon* was suffused with the pathos of the hopeless comeback attempt. The tragic side of this most successful of all American literary careers was Hemingway's failure to develop as a writer, his beginning at the top of his game and going downhill with each succeeding effort. If alcohol was the key to this decline, then the increasing sogginess of the writing was wholly of a piece with the afflictions of the man: the debilitating headaches; the susceptibility to spills and accidents; the rushes of fury that came out of nowhere to possess him like dybbuks; the paranoid delusions and suicidal depressions that took hold of him toward the end and finally claimed him. All were the afflictions of a drinker.

Hemingway was a creature of contradictions from the very outset, and just about everyone who has dealt with him has been absorbed by the paradox of a man so vulgar, so boisterous, so eager for applause and so quick to applaud himself, being also a celebrant of grace and, for a brief portion of his career, the tragic poet of human vulnerability. "He inveighs with much scorn against the literary life and against the professional literary man of the cities," Edmund Wilson said of him in 1939, "and then manages to give the impression that he himself is a professional literary man of the touchiest and most self-conscious kind." These letters reinforce one's impression that Hemingway found writing a perilous adventure, and that the abuse he heaped upon other writers, usually in disparagement of their manhood—or womanhood, as the case happened to be—complemented his reverence for the literary life in a delicate system of balances designed to shore up his morale. So alien is the persona that dominates the letters from the deadpan heroes of the early fiction, so utterly opposed, that one can't be blamed for seeing the mask of power and omnicompetence he wore in public as a talisman against all that was vulnerable in him, and fearful.

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From our arguments with others, said Yeats, we make rhetoric; from our arguments with ourselves, poetry; and the poetry of repression that sustains Hemingway's early writing glowed with a fine and cool light so long as the basic issues were unresolved, and neither the tender nor the armor-plated ideas of himself held total sway. The splendid conception of Jake Barnes is a filament of energy hung in perfect equipoise between despair and courage. Though utterly without hope, Jake refuses to go to pieces, and nothing in his brand of self-composure strikes us as false. The wound and the bow. Later on, when Hemingway would deny the wound—excepting the shrapnel wounds he displayed like stigmata—and those apprehensions that had occasioned the stoicism and reserve to begin with, his exquisite syntheses went to pieces, and with them whatever was lean and precise in his writing. Yet, true to the law of the return of the repressed, all the childish impulses he had strongarmed into submission—the hungers, the dependencies, the nightmares and dreams of omnipotence—came back to him as delusions he mistook for realities. Hemingway's world, Isaac Rosenfeld once said shrewdly, is that which answers to a man's capacity for dealing a blow. The man who called himself Papa at twenty-eight and wanted to become the world's daddy was too preoccupied with draining glasses and delivering knockout punches to notice how childish his idea of manhood was. The more grown up he strove to appear, the more infantile he actually became. No wonder Papa remains a source of such amazement to us: in our time he was the greatest baby of American letters.

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Steven Marcus

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND CULTURE

To bring together psychoanalytic theory and cultural change, as I shall set out to do, is to evoke at once certain familiar juxtapositions and unsettled considerations. Such an undertaking brings forward the relation, for example, of the unconscious to history and to social change. These notions almost instantly set off in turn ideas about the role played by the individual psyche, or the psychology of individual persons, in history and vice versa, the connection between historical circumstances and individual psychology, the psychology, for example, of notable actors in one or another historical drama. The continued growth of a subdiscipline that calls itself psychohistory suggests something of the persistent interest exerted by such imputed connections, correlations and causalities. Among the many questions is one that I shall first bring forward in its simplest interrogative form: does the psyche itself have a history? Can we ascribe a significant historical existence to unconscious mental structures, and can we write some parts of that history? Does cultural change affect us in the sense that it is registered by inferable and describable alterations in the institutions of our unconscious minds?

If we consult Freud, we quickly find ourselves in a familiar bewilderment bred out of the profusion and complexity of the relevant materials as they distribute themselves throughout his work. As a cultivated European of the late nineteenth century, Freud was soaked in the past. Freud's specially favored mode of explanation was almost always historical. For Freud, the privileged explanation of an event tended regularly to be a coherent account of its historical existence, and the innermost meaning of a phenomenon was likely to be inseparable from a hypothetical demonstration of how it came to be. Like Darwin's theory of evolution, to which it owes a good deal in a very general way, psychoanalytic theory's explanatory powers are largely historical or retrospective, not predictive.

At the same time, Freud's own explicit dealings on a large scale with historical problems tended to take the form, as he himself

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acknowledged, of mythologies, of "scientific myths," to be sure, but myths nonetheless.* Moreover, Freud regarded the unconscious in its more distant regions and in its primal workings as outside of time.

There is one context, of course, in which Freud does attend to history in more familiar or what may be thought of as more normative senses of the term. This has to do with his manner of conceiving of the life of each individual person, or each individual representative of the human species or race, for that is how he thinks of us. The lives of each of us comprise a history, whether that history be articulated in a full narrative account or array of accounts or remain fragmentary, incomplete, or latent. Beginning before birth and ending in early childhood, each life has a prehistory, which is relatively recoverable or reconstructable. Each life's history, furthermore, is punctuated with what appear to be suprahistorical, or perhaps cultural, episodes and elements. The experience of each separate individual, Freud often remarks, generally recapitulates the processes undergone by larger cultural entities. Freud writes this history many times and in a variety of forms. Sometimes he composes stories, as in his case histories. On other occasions he writes institutional history, as when, for example, he deals with the growth across time of the ego.

These circumstances are in some important parts biologically programmed, but they are also open to modifications, arrestments, and diversions at many points along the way. The theory strongly implies a telos—a designated goal or end that for want of any other terms one calls *normal maturity*. The theory in its evolving versions undertakes to illuminate both how this development is attained and the uncountable ways in which it may miscarry. It also undertakes to explain the disadvantages and deficits that regularly attach to developmental processes that have gone astray, and it undertakes as well to explain the occasional immense value that may accompany abnormal, incomplete, or aberrant development—most notably, of course, in figures of singular creative cultural powers. And psychoanalytic therapy is itself founded in part upon such considerations.

To the question, then, of whether or not the psyche itself has a history, we have answered yes. But this affirmative response is so generalized and inclusive that it is almost useless. I propose

*It does not help matters terribly much that he also suggested that "every science comes in the end to a kind of mythology."

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therefore to revise and narrow the question and ask instead, Does the psyche have a modern history?

One of the ways we can resume the discussion is to consult Freud's final and fullest representations of his theory of the mind. Significantly, he began to publish works containing this revisionary scheme after the end of World War I. These writings contain new descriptions of the structural workings of the mind, a newly revised theory of the instincts, and new dispositions of mental forces as these were ascribed to their organization in newly classified unconscious psychic formations. In one of these agencies, the superego, the nexus of unconscious psychic processes and cultural phenomena, is explicitly put forward.

Freud had made some preliminary observations about the superego—which he initially called the ego ideal—in his 1914 essay, "On Narcissism: An Introduction"; he discussed this agency briefly again in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) and at some further length in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921). It was, however, in his account of certain of the "higher functions" of the mind in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) that he first developed this conception of length; thereafter it was a permanent occupant of one of the centers of his attention. The ego ideal, Freud had first speculated, is the later substitute, constructed by each individual to take the place of the "lost narcissism" of infancy and early childhood, when each of us "was his own ideal." In order to assure that "the narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal" is sustained, Freud postulated a "special psychical agency" whose task was to watch the ego and measure it in comparison with the ideal. These functions or characteristics, Freud reflects, are associated with what is commonly known as "conscience," and this internal watchman or monitor is in turn connected with the mind's self-critical faculty and its sense of guilt. Hence from the very outset, Freud's discussion of this agency was placed in a context in which some of the most primordial and some of the most advanced mental functions were brought together, juxtaposed in such a way as to elicit their latent contradictoriness.

For Freud the superego brings into being the higher and "supra-personal" side of human nature. In it he discerns the origins of religion, morality and the social sense. At the same time, the superego is "the heir of the Oedipus complex," and by virtue of this patrimony is "also the expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id." In establishing the superego, "the ego has mastered the Oedipus complex and at the

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same time placed itself in subjection to the id." We are involved in what appears to be irreducible contradiction. Higher and lower converge, for the act of mastery is at once an act of subjection. And in this sense the superego, whose origins are ultimately the external world, comes to represent, vis-à-vis the ego, the realities of the internal world, of the id, of the psyche itself. One of the things that Freud was trying to do, I believe, in this disquieting derivation was to explain how it is that the inner forces opposing instinctual and libidinal impulses seem to have the very character of what it is they are opposing; how it is that our consciences and our senses of guilt can be as wild, peremptory, savage, and ferocious as the actions and thoughts for which they upbraid and punish us. They are so, Freud suggests, because they are, in fact, derivatives of the identical forces to which they are antagonistic.

Throughout the latter part of his career, Freud returned at crucial moments to reconsider the central importance of the superego in the psychic economy of our unconscious minds and to rework its place within his evolving theoretical system.

In "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924), Freud focuses on bringing into further systematic coherence the disparate elements that cluster about the central, or Oedipal, phase of the formation of the superego. The Oedipal crisis is brought toward resolution by the fear of castration—that outcome being in the case of the male child either the punishment for or the precondition of the fulfillment of the fantasies of genital satisfaction entailed in the permutations of the Oedipal situation.

All the same, Freud reserves a certain measure of skepticism about the value of these extended proceedings. And he permits himself to write that, "It is true that we cannot tell at once whether we have really gained any new knowledge by this, or have only enriched our store of formulas." This minatory observation has a characteristic edge to it; and it refers I believe to the entire undertaking of ego psychology. Freud seems, among other things, to be wondering whether this new terminology may be the beginning of psychoanalysis as a formal system and is giving voice to intuitive doubts about the larger value of such a development.

In the important and difficult book, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud refers on a number of separate occasions to the role of the superego in symptom formation—a role which it shares with the ego itself. Freud's major dealings with the superego in this work, however, have to do with his new theory of anxiety and his

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tracing of its evolutionary presence throughout the course of our experiences. I think it should be noted that an unstated, positively correlated state probably accompanies each of these structural transformations of anxiety. Freud does indeed observe that "mental health very much depends on the superego's being normally developed—that is, on its having become sufficiently impersonal." And that has not happened with people who suffer from neuroses; "their super-ego still confronts their ego as a strict father confronts a child; and their morality operates in a primitive fashion in that the ego gets itself punished by the super-ego." It is to be presumed that a similar process of evolution might be observed in culture as well. That is true for Freud in some degree; in some other degree it is less than true; and, in another sense entirely, it is not true at all.

The degree to which it is true for Freud is suggested in this passage from *The Future of an Illusion* (1927):

> It is not true that the human mind has undergone no developments since the earliest times and that, in contrast to the advances of science and technology, it is the same today as it was at the beginning of history. We can point out one of these mental advances at once. It is in keeping with the course of human development that external coercion gradually becomes internalized; for a special mental agency, man's super-ego, takes it over. . . . Every child presents this process of transformation to us; only by that means does it become a moral and social being.

This process is, Freud concludes, "a most precious cultural asset." The degree to which it may be less than true is expressed in his last great work, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). In this work Freud asks the single major question "Why is man unhappy?" and he then proceeds to supply himself and the reader with a superabundance of answers.

These answers divide into two categories. First, we are unhappy because we "cannot tolerate the amounts of frustration which society imposes . . . in the service of its cultural ideals." That frustration expresses itself most fully in civilized humanity's sexual life, which, Freud writes, beginning with the prohibition against an incestuous choice of object, has undergone "the most drastic mutilation." Additional taboos, laws and customs ordaining still further restrictions have followed, and although not all societies are equally severe in the constraints they impose, the society of Western civilization has gone the farthest in restrictively prescribing

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legalized, permanent, heterosexual, monogamous, genital sexuality as the single norm for every grown person.

Nevertheless, he concludes, the sexual life of civilized man remains "severely impaired; it sometimes gives the impression of being in process of involution as a function. . . . One is probably justified in assuming that its importance as a source of feelings of happiness, and therefore in the fulfillment of our aim in life, has sensibly diminished." Half a century has passed since Freud made these statements. In that interval the sexual life of part of Western culture has begun to undergo a series of qualitative changes, in both attitudes and behavior, that are neither foreseen nor made room for in Freud's assertions. Whether his statement about sexuality's decrease as a source of feelings of happiness holds or must also be modified remains, in my opinion, an arguable question.

The second great source of man's unhappiness is his instinctive aggressiveness. This force expresses itself directly enough in collective, organized human history, but it also makes itself felt in the sacrifices that civilization exacts from each individual's original will to Hobbesian undertakings. The centrality of the aggressive instinct in Freud's later writings can hardly be excessively estimated. It constitutes for the later Freud "the greatest impediment to civilization." And civilization deals with this threat by introjecting and internalizing it in each one of us, by sending that aggressiveness back to where it came from and directing it towards our own egos.

I am left with an abiding sentiment of contradiction. On the one hand, the intellectual construction itself is massive, logical and, once one has entered into it, formidably difficult to disengage from, if it is not entirely escape-proof. It is virtually claustral in the way it closes down one alley of possibility after another and leaves progressively decreasing scope for mitigation and alleviation. On the other hand, the psychic reality that it purports to exemplify is itself contradictory in nature. Not only is it grounded in indissolubly opposed impulses; its fundamental character is constituted in conflicting conceptual terms. And it anticipates no ending to either discord, contestations, or contradictions. The superego is itself one of the central sites of such antagonisms. It is the most latterly developed of the three primary institutions of the mental apparatus; it consists of portions of the experienced world that have been internalized and differentially transmuted; it remains open to alterations throughout the course of life, and is itself a register in each individual person of cultural development. Yet it is also, in

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Freud's account, simultaneously rigid, unbending, inflexible, severe, unforgiving, sadistic, and primitive, and it perseveres in every one of these qualities. It is one of the places at which society and culture penetrate into our unconscious minds and permeate their workings.

Freud has, I believe, shifted the pitch of discourse and has actively introduced the notion of a collective or transpersonal superego; and in *Civilization and Its Discontents* he did, to be sure, assert that "the community, too, evolves a super-ego under whose influence cultural development proceeds." These two formations have many points of agreement; chief among them is that both set up "strict ideal demands, disobedience to which is visited with 'fear of conscience.' " Freud concluded that "the two processes, that of the cultural development of the group and that of the cultural development of the individual, are, as it were, always interlocked. For that reason some of the manifestations and properties of the super-ego can be more easily detected in its behavior in the cultural community than in the separate individual."

I want, in an extremely cursory and foreshortened way, to bring forward three psychoanalytic contributions made by followers of Freud. Here I want to examine the contributions made by Abram Kardiner, Erik Erikson, and Heinz Kohut, and they may be suggested in the central piece of terminology chosen by each: Kardiner's notion of "basic personality," Erikson's notion of "identity," and Kohut's notion of the "self."

Kardiner's pioneering work was done in collaboration with ethnographers and other social scientists. The "basic personality" type, he argued, tended to be specific to certain cultural configurations or institutional constellations, and these two kinds of entities tended additionally to sustain one another. Kardiner's investigations focused on the examination within one culture or another of the relations between childhood experiences and disciplines as institutions of one order, and religion, folklore, and social organizations as institutions of another, though related, order. The hypothesis these analyses were testing out ran to the effect that if the known "conditions of childhood become consolidated and form a basis for subsequent projective use, then we can expect to find some evidence of it in all projective systems"—namely, cultural institutions. And in his two chief works, *The Individual and His Society* (1939) and *The Psychological Frontiers of Society* (1945), Kardiner undertook to explore these correlations.

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Kardiner then introduced a further complicating number of considerations. The Tanalese personality with its peculiar sense of reality was attached to a particular arrangement of institutions and economy—dry cultivation of rice on communally owned land. When the exhaustion of the jungle compelled abandonment of the method of dry cultivation for wet, there was a scramble for the fertile valleys, private ownership replaced communal holdings, family organization broke up as a consequence, and the entire culture began to come apart and collapse. Kardiner's conclusions on these matters were that, in a culture which conceives of reality along the lines of the Tanalese nuclear projective systems, there will be a radical impairment of adaptive capacities. The external world can be dealt with in a very limited number of ways if it is perceived "in accordance with the analogy of an all-powerful father and an obedient child. When the father's power gives out, as it did in Tanala, only disorganized aggression and panic could ensue. The individual who deals with the outer world on the basis of obedience can develop no sense of responsibility for his own fate and cannot therefore develop those manipulative powers of which he is capable. The intensity and cruelty of an exacting super-ego is no surrogate for responsibility for oneself."

Kardiner elaborated these findings in his extended analyses of other and very different cultures. He composes, for instance, a most impressive account of the Comanche, which was for a short period a highly successful predatory culture. Through extremely considerate child-rearing, the Comanches developed in their braves a character that was uninhibited, courageous, and full of positive self-esteem. Yet Comanche action—warfare, conquest, and plunder—was exercised "exclusively outside the society," and hence the capacity of that society as a whole to develop was severely limited. Comanche society could exist "only as long as there were slaves to steal and cattle to rustle. In other words, this fine ego structure . . . was bought at the expense of criminality perpetrated on others and at the cost of the complete collapse of the society once this criminality was incapable of being exercised." It is almost as if Comanche society had no cultural or transindividual superego when it came to other groups or societies.

This analysis was followed by a polar contrast, an account of Alorese society in Indonesia, in which infant and child-rearing practices were capricious, inconsistent, chaotic, neglectful, arbitrary, unstable, and cruel. These behaviors led to a personality type characterized by low degrees of organization, aspiration, and

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idealization. Strong positive attachments to parents were not established, and hence internalizations of parental ideals were poor, as were certain further internal structural consequences of such an absence. Kardiner reminds us that if his theory is correct, then it follows that "repressions do not fall in the same place in all cultures." And he concludes that "if the super-ego is inadequate and there is no internalization of discipline, we cannot expect the society to have any interest in social justice, in a judicial system, or even in government."

The last culture Kardiner examined was a rural, Midwestern American community, "Plainville, U.S.A." Kardiner had no difficulty in constructing from James West's accounts the familiar basic personality type of our society, formed in this connection in childhood primarily out of strong attachments by way of idealization and internalization of the parents, especially the mother. This personality was also thwarted sexually in ways that psychoanalysis had for some time made readers familiar with. However, a number of changes also seem to have occurred. Except for the very poor, religion was already (in 1939) in a state of desuetude, and had been replaced as a salvational equivalent—as it had been in the society at large—by "success or social well-being." In order to begin to explain some of the complexities of our civilization's internal character, Kardiner undertook a schematic interpretation of its past history.

Medieval cosmology conceived of the world as governed by a "powerful father whose commands" were at the same time "natural law." Under the dual influence of the Reformation and the new natural and mathematical sciences of the seventeenth century that succeeded it, the elements of this constellation underwent a transmutation. Natural law was freed from its contingency on divine will; man's conception of himself and his relation to both the deity and the world shifted, as did the valences and vectors of force within those mental agencies which govern the individual person's sense of responsibility for himself and his sense of authorization to investigate and explore freely both external and internal circumstances. It amounted, in Kardiner's words, to "a new allocation of the superego or conscience mechanisms." This new allocation had its due influence on social and personal realities, on notions of the deity, on economic formations (which of course also influenced these allocations in turn), and on changing class and status groupings. But, according to Kardiner, the most direct and important consequences of these summatory changes was an "alteration of the whole superego system."

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From Kardiner's cross-cultural studies there emerges the hypothesis that certain things that "we were induced to regard as parts of human nature—the capacity for idealization of the parents, the capacity to introject the parents and thus lay a firm basis for super-ego formation, so essential to the stability of a culture . . . these essential features in the development of a conscience can be strangulated in infancy." And from his historical excursion there reemerges the hypothesis that the disposition of forces within the superego may, within a single culture, change across historical time. Hence it is possible to imagine and discover societies or cultures in which there is an actual superego deficit; and hence it is also possible to demonstrate within the course of development of one complex society and culture alterations within the unconscious.

This reading of Kardiner's major work leads to the inference that it ended with the covert stipulation that two further books be written. Their titles would almost certainly have had to be *Childhood and Society* and *Young Man Luther*. I make such a remark, not to minimize the substance of Erikson's contribution, but to suggest its consequent place in an overdetermined sequence of developments (to which I cannot here do anything that resembles justice). Erikson is the most cheerful of ego psychologists, and to the buoyancy of his native temperament, he has added the incurable optimism of his adopted culture.

Identity, as used by Erikson in the context of ego psychology, means something very like "the self" in one of its several psychoanalytic bearings—the inner representation of the ego as it is invested with narcissistic impulses. Erikson first used the term, however, in the form of "ego identity," which he both associated with and distinguished from the superego and the ego ideal. Erikson conceived of the superego as "a more archaic, more thoroughly internalized and more unconscious representative of man's unborn proclivity toward the development of a primitive, categorical conscience." The ego ideal, however, in Erikson's own redesignation of it, "seems to be more flexibly and consciously bound to the ideals of the particular historical era as absorbed in childhood." And the third step in this hierarchy is ego identity or identity, which would "in comparison be even closer to changing social reality in that it would test, select, and integrate self-images derived from the psychosocial crises of childhood in the light of the ideological climate of youth" (*Identity: Youth and Crisis*). As that last clause suggests, Erikson tends to use the term in ways that include all three of the differentiated phases. What I think he essentially means by the conception is described in

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this passage: "a process 'located' *in the core of the individual* and yet also *in the core of his communal culture*, a process which establishes, in fact, the identity of those two identities." In other words, it is the locus of meeting of individual psyche and culture once again.

Erikson's strengths, it is to be noted, are not those of abstract conceptualization or consecutive theoretical power. He is a master of the vignette and of the telling detail; his best historical works are amplified and elaborated resonations of quite specific historical moments or episodes: Luther's fit in the choir, or The Event in Ghandhi's life, the mill strike at Ahmedabad. We can see those considerable gifts at work in Erikson's writings on Luther, as he develops in rich and intimate detail some of the matters that Kardiner had abstractly adverted to. The Renaissance, Erikson writes, was in large measure a series of revolutions made to regain power and reclaim pleasure from "the Church's systematic and terroristic exploitation of man's proclivity for a negative conscience." (Negative conscience equals "sense of guilt" or tension between ego and superego, such terms now becoming, in these quarters, the functional equivalents of dirty words.) The Catholic Church in Luther's time tried to exercise an "absolute power of negative external conscience: negative in that it was based on a sense of sin, and external in that it was defined and redefined by a punitive agency" exclusively in charge of morality and the enforcement of sanctions against disobedience. The Renaissance "gave man a vacation from his negative conscience," and thus freed the ego "to gather strength for manifold activity."

Erikson then reaches for a characteristically well-turned and reverberant conclusion: "We must accept this universal, if weird frontier of the negative conscience as the circumscribed *locus* of Luther's work. If we do, we will be able to see that the tools he used were those of the Renaissance: fervent return to the original texts; determined anthropocentrism . . .; and the affirmation of his own organ of genius and craftsmanship, namely, the voice of the vernacular." Erikson's culture heroes tend to speak in such distinctive voices; they are most of them rebellious idealists of a complex sort, whose lives and works have enlarged our humanity, largely at the expense of the weakening of the archaic superego.

Yet historically, the matter is by no means that straightforwardly simple. Erikson's focusing upon problems of ego identity and cultural identity and the concomitant effort to weaken or neutralize "the autocracy of the infantile super-ego" arose in some degree out of his clinical experience. The shift in emphasis expressed by his

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work, he states, has been "dictated by historical accident—i.e., by the revolutions that are taking place in our lifetime, affecting our personal fortunes as well as the symptoms presented and the unconscious demands made on us by our patients . . . the patient of today suffers most under the problem of what he should believe in and who he should—or, indeed, might—be or become; while the patient of early psychoanalysis suffered most under inhibitions which prevented him from being what and who he thought he knew he was."

These latter phenomena have been joined with a third theoretical formulation, the psychoanalytic notion of the self. Although this conception has itself an interesting history in the various branches of psychoanalytic thought, it has been associated most extensively with the work of Heinz Kohut and his two substantial contributions, *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) and *The Restoration of the Self* (1977). I can do no more than point to his major theses. The presenting symptomatology of patients suffering from narcissistic personality disorders tends to be "ill defined." Originally vague complaints soon focus, however, on "pervasive feelings of emptiness" and on impressions on the part of the patient that he "is not fully real"; tendencies toward feeling "vaguely depressed" regularly occur along with convictions of being "drained of energy" and having no "zest" for work or other activities; these coexist with extreme vulnerability to shiftings in self-esteem, and heightened sensitivity to the interest—or lack thereof—of others in him. The patient's experience of himself tends to be fragmentary and discontinuous, and based once again, in a simplified sense, on an unstable and precarious sustainment of self-esteem. A patient will typically complain "of a pervasive feeling that he was not fully alive (though he was not depressed); of painful tension states which lay on the borderline of physical and psychological experience; and of a tendency toward brooding worrisomeness about his physical and mental functions." Vertical splittings in the ego will separate sectors of overt exhibitionistic claims and grandiose behaviors from central sectors of depleted self-esteem, inclinations toward shame, and profound needs for approval. Disturbances of self-acceptance accompany feelings of general "inner uncertainty and purposelessness concerning widespread sectors of . . . life." It seems on the face of it as if these people are actually suffering from what was once called unhappiness.

What these symptoms reveal, Kohut concludes, after some decades of clinical experience, are a number of underlying defects. These deficits have largely to do with the inadequate formation of the superego at a series of points of development. For example, what

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is ordinarily missing in the early lives of such patients is the massive, but phase-appropriate experience of both infatuation with and disappointment in the Oedipal parents, an experience that leads "ultimately to the idealization of the superego, a developmental and maturational step which is of great importance in protecting the personality against the danger of narcissistic regression." That is to say, there has not occurred in such patients "the building up of those aspects of the superego which direct toward the ego the commands and prohibitions, the praise, scolding and punishment that the parent has formerly directed toward the child." Such patients lack, in other words, an adequate "nuclear superego" upon which later structures may be built. In general, what these patients have suffered are fathers whom they have been unable to idealize, in large measure because, according to Kohut's testimony, the fathers themselves have been disturbed in their own self-esteem so that they have been unable to tolerate the role of idealized figures that children (sons, of course, in particular) demand and require of their parents if they are in fact to achieve the large-scale internalization of structure that forms a superego.

These perceived changes in what appears to be the dominant pathology—the dominant structure of unconscious defenses of those members of the middle class who choose to resort to psychoanalytic treatment—have suggested a number of areas of possible exploration. What seems to come into sharpest focus in these patients is not a representation of a "psychic apparatus trying to deal with drives and structural conflicts," but an unconscious struggling to maintain its primitive cohesion, a self moved by the anxiety that it may in fact be disintegrating. These young patients have been raised in families in which distance rather than excessive closeness seems to have characterized the relations between parents and children. The older structural neuroses were in part the result of deprivations and negative excesses that arose out of such circumstances as the belief in, and even the reality of, the integrity of the family as a unit, out of a social life that was densely concentrated upon the home, and out of the relatively "clear-cut definition of the roles of father and mother." Where the surrounding immediate world of the middle class child "used to be experienced as threateningly close," it now tends "more and more" to be perceived "as threateningly distant." Children who in the past tended to be "*over*stimulated by the emotional . . . life of their parents . . . are now often *under*stimulated." Where previously childhood erotic life was connected with Oedipal rivalries, parental inhibitions, and severe internal conflicts, "many children now seek

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the effect of erotic stimulation in order to relieve loneliness," and fill an emotional blankness or absence.

These changes have come about gradually and in the course of generations. They have been produced by myriad circumstances and express themselves in behavioral, social, and cultural forms that are too numerous and too complex for me to do more than continue to advert to allusively. They have to do most generally with changing relations of authority within the family, between men and women in their different roles, between parents and children, and children and their decreasing number of siblings. They have to do as well with the continually destabilized relations between such institutions of authority as the family, schools, and religion, and with the general dispersion of authority away from and out of these former centers of command, interdiction, and guidance, and with the apparent non-existence as yet of evolutionary replacements for them.

It was in 1881, one hundred and one years ago, that the meetings between Josef Breuer and Anna O. that led to so much began to take place. It was Freud who made so much of those meetings, and his dealings with them led him on to make a number of fundamental discoveries about the mind. Among them was his theory that the unconscious mind will tend to form itself into a limited variety of structures or agencies. Today we can see that the particular configuration of those agencies as Freud first perceived and then theoretically constructed them were appropriate to and expressive of the deep character structure of late high Victorian bourgeois culture—even, perhaps, as it was beginning to come apart. In particular, the excessive and punitive powers of the superego in that theory and character were prototypical of that culture and of its leading awareness of itself. No one in full possession of his senses could long for a return of the agency of the superego in the forms and intensities of its earlier historic manifestations. Yet no one fully alive today can fail to perceive either that the exchanges and bargains that constitute cultural development do not amount to a rational progress either. As psychoanalysis as a unique cultural and therapeutic discipline completes its first century of existence and begins its second, it seems to me that the tasks confronting it in the culture that it has arisen from, taken hold in, and critically expresses, are at least as grave and as severe in magnitude as the tasks that first confronted it one hundred years ago.

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POEMS

Bohdan Zadura

FAREWELL TO OSTEND

I

We may call this compulsion freedom
The beaches of April rocky and empty
And the wind It alone is ubiquitous

O belated spring The light from the stars
Runs to the eye too long Too long
Green gathers itself into bloom Too long

We learn patience Too many questions
Poorly phrased for this one life
Too many experiences exclude

Perhaps there are no answers Perhaps
The answer is in the questions Perhaps
May be an experiment To Be perhaps

II

The sun stood still on the zenith O belated knowledge of
Enlightening dreams How many years are needed
To know oneself—he said looking at the people through the
pane

K. was silent He judged the proper
Answer to the world to be silence K.
Had that behind him He believed in secrets

Translated from the Polish by Hubert F. Babinski

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He was able to listen Pretended to understand Was not
surprised
By anything Ice exploded on the Vistula The panes shook
A. continued

Let us say that duty
Exists—let us say But how can one speak of it
Not knowing reality and oneself

III

A woman entered Someone else but resembling
O comedy of likeness Nothing repeats
A. looks at the street where he met

History and fate Fate was not history
History was not woman But he runs away
Before he finds out the results of his escape

That's all Nothing more A woman passes
A delicate scent not the scent of
Acacia forests in the full June sunlight

That scatters Someone else but resembling
Is like the hum of bees
In acacia forests Is like music

On the threshold of Sound Fleeting
Inviting to a chase Awakens associations
Promises Irritation Awakens desire

Being a remembrance Unseen cloud
The more scattered the more corporeal
And again explosions And again the panes shake

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I wasn't anywhere Nothing happened
They didn't rob the girl in the crowded corridor
The boys coming home didn't sing

VIII

A. thinks—What do I have What do I owe
What kind of court do I choose What do I know and what
must I
If I know what I want

And will this knowledge last a day week month
And is the Misleading Sea a sea of errors
—The waitress brings the check on a tray

IX

The Head Manager of the poem demands
A reckoning from sleep The longer the better
He—he underlines with stress—is also reckoned

That night I was in Byzantium The present
Account includes a description of my stay
In a city where—I stress—I had been for the first time

Among fire blackened houses
I walked Priests were leaving
The basilica churchyard in a gloomy procession

In the dusky chilly interior
A Gregorian choir sang but made up of children
On the floor lay broken stained-glass windows

A tipsy American was muttering under his breath
Accompanying the Archbishop on the high altar
By the wall springing suddenly a girl

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Danced naked clothed in liturgical garb
Twirling a riding crop in her hand
A mad Cassandra of late Byzantium

Just as I thought that I'd understand it
I was called away by a secret telegram
The milk cans rang It was six in the morning

X

Prince your kingdom is turning to ashes
Those quotations from Shakespeare Late Byzantium
Those trips in time Those quotations

Byzantium and Ostend A hotel where I won't be
And Lucius Sergius Catiline about whom Krasiński
Wanted to write an essay Cool Roman leaves

On a November evening I didn't touch
My flesh won't swim in the Tiber
Those quotations of time not given

That can't be chosen That trip
Not in time but on the map of time
O the geography of youth Those quotations from Shakespeare

XI

That nostalgia that put on a face
Counting syllables That ambition to write good
Poems that cannot help And stand for

Nothing That agreement not
Possible But I'm sorry Self-confidence
Arrogance Neglect with which

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IV

What I could What I must What I ought to
What I wanted Why I yielded
Why do lost causes interest me

Gloria victis as a certain good lady writes
In the wagon carrying Romuald Traugutt
The sun stands still on the zenith O belated knowledge

Error breeds error It is a river of errors
Neither triumph nor death Displaced in time
And a false note in self-examination

Our truth lasts as long as the scent
Of perfume in a smoky cafe Our truths
In a world without truth Misleading sea

V

The nineteenth century was too solid
Too heavy to explode
It hasn't left yet It's still crumbling

No longer do dreams rule in us
The dead the weightier It's in
This wainscoting these candelabra And it's

In rest rooms now decorated with new
Information columns of numbers announcements phallic
symbols
Degraded underground streams

Of anarchy That's the nineteenth century
Arranging its pencils and quills
The old seek revenge for long hidden desires

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VI

Jets fly over that moat
Our feet propped against the edges
Grow into the ground Moving

Neither forward nor backward We look
At the sky where jets
Draw light feathery lines

That moat between us
Ignores jets are alone
Alone in ourselves A shadow falls between us

And our fingernails My hand
Is not me Suspects
Tangle themselves in statements

VII

What was I doing a year and a half ago?
I ate dinner in town Took a shower
There was a heat wave I read the sports news in the papers

At one or two I turned on the television
I have witnesses A rocket was launched
From Cape Kennedy And that is heaven above

The living dead and unborn can confirm it
That didn't last long The acacia faded
They will return Because they already returned

On the night of the seventeenth of July
I looked at the moon Through wild grapes
Through the train window

Aldrin and Armstrong can confirm it
The Head Manager of the poem demands
The train ticket Excuse me

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Beautiful and sovereign Cleverness may be
May be but not defenseless
We were able to look at ourselves with a critical eye

XII

Neoclassicism—K. suddenly says—was an episode
An important lesson and a good one Even though an episode
One can no longer play in literature

One should pass beyond it It was a school
Of Rigor and discipline of Certain I'd say
Intellectual responsibility that taught one honesty

XIII

It's April And the devastated mind is
On the edge of spring And scarlet sage is not blooming
In the squares And empty café gardens And

What will come of it And the poem doesn't come together
According to the old syntax For according to the old syntax
The world doesn't come together

It's April And metaphysics that is being realized
And music that's expiring Ice is exploding
On the Vistula The panes shake And there's the street
landscape

Where snow falls with rain And the wind
(It alone is ubiquitous) And the woman who passed
Like scent And your flesh that I'm forgetting That

And yet I'm sorry—thinks A.—late
Byzantium Ravenna and Ostend
Alps that lost their whiteness in so many poems

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And it's April Anno Domini 1970
And what I forget and what I remember
Depends upon new syntax or

or silence

Harvey Shapiro

THE CARD

Closed in by the rain, the February chill,
he looks at her card sent from an island
in the sun. She writes "The vasts and deeps
of the mistakenness of this undertaking
remain to be measured." What he drinks
can't begin to fill his emptiness
or banish the chill. Only the pen seems warm.
Is she warning him of her vision of their
condition? Possibly. She writes
"I'm having funny dreams, you and I
in Paris. Also you and my mother
married. And others." When she comes back
he will begin to batter at her indifference
again. She does not sign love, just
"Pray for me" and the initial of her name.

THE WISH

This night in Brooklyn is as ancient
as nights get, though the moon
hangs like a lamp, and the traffic

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slurs in my room.
My desire is as sharp as whiskey
or a hurt nerve, from my head
to my hand: to populate
the void, to turn this blankness
into a field of stars where I can sleep
forever in my earned sleep,comforted by the wind off Atlantic
Avenue, and the waters at its end.
Lights rise from the water, a City
across the way, that I raise
in my empty room to starlight.

Daryl Hine

THE FIRST SNOWFLAKE

that signals
The beginning of the Winter
Glistens on the window
Like some early symptom
Of a fatal illness.
Soon the scene is filled with
Whirling white corpuscles
As suicide battalions
Fall on one another
Building with their bodies
Permafrost foundations
For the icy city
Till the garden's sculptured
Frieze is under wraps.

Blanketed but bare the
Trees assume ungainly

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Hieratic postures,
Vegetable dummies
Modelling the latest
Thing in winter fashions.
Now prospects that were opened
By defoliation
With the close of Autumn
At once shut up again,
Quaintly claustrophobic
As the folded landscape
Painted on a fan.

Pretty as a Xmas
Card, the uninviting,
Uninvited season
Bivouacked outside,
Whether frozen hard and
Fast or snowing solid,
Arrests us in its grip,
Prisoners of Winter
Hostage to the weather,
Glad to stay inside
Away from the forbidding,
Beautiful but frigid
Kingdom of the cold.

In the unenlightened
Interstellar spaces
Glimpsed through telescopic
Windows it is winter,
Eternally nocturnal
Temperatures approaching
A kind of all time low.
Even so, the silence
There is mitigated
Faintly by a whispered
Microcosmic echo
Like an ancient, distant
Memory of life.

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Metaphors are always
False by definition,
Similes are all too
Literally true.
Buried in the background
Under all that blasted
Whiteness the remains of
Winter's victims, namely
Our monosyllabic loves,
Pete and Lief and Bud
Cool it in uncertain
Expectation of a
Temporary thaw.

Edward Barrett

PROEM

The true story makes it abundantly clear long after those diverting tales about the invention of cheese and silk panties, or the humdrum life of giants in Giantville, and how the pilgrims made their long journey to bring one surface in contact with another surface, like two pages facing each other in a book, with the interest more in the passage from one place to the other and all the changes of light and suffering on the voyage, the kinds of tunes they played on their tin whistles, what dances, the shape of their hats and shoe buckles, just the way our own passages from one state, say, of happiness to another, say, of "dejection: an ode" are more interesting, more fraught with danger than just showing up at the amphitheater. Definitions are casually thrown in (short-sword: a sword with a short blade), or "details on the whole are usually concrete," and facts from biology (vulva) as well as James Clerk Maxwell's

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field equation dealing with potential (the electrical kind) until the whole thing rounds itself out into a sort of promontory or island where we stand, very small and very distinct, staring out into all that blue, surprised at the amount of affection we feel for it today as we realize how good it is not to be the first ones here having to make up words for love or songs for jumping rope because there are prerogatives, after all, in heritage and chromosomes and history pulsing at our feet in little blue waves by the shore. It really is just today, like many another day in Evening Land where the action of the story is now taking place, although action is hardly the word for this exquisite moment since it doesn't matter whether we get it right or wrong; in fact, we're supposed to fail. Our pleasure really is in watching them sink out there in the oriental surf, with the "full" knowledge that our turn may be next—although it never is our turn because when it comes, it's different. History is all around us in the shrouds of the parachute, and it's serious this business of ours, interlinearity, writing glosses on the violet-blue text of seeming. The brain turns round in its skull-pan, or the ear is trumpet for the neck. The flowers have been roaring out their names for the sky since early this morning. Each asterisk takes off like a helicopter buzzing the inhabitants of the cove down there who are waving or water-skiing behind their speedboats. What are their names for it? The textual commentator labels it a locus classicus and corrects the spelling. At least three doctors have been collecting footnotes on my own corpus in the hope of expunging errors and bringing out a corrected text. And someday they will too, but by then the barbarians will have sacked not only the provinces but also the capital, disfiguring all the statues, and the story will have passed to other hands who will carefully pack it with the two "o's": oblivion and obliquity. The surface really is a surface this time, receding just at the point where you want to enter it—the silver screen made more out of mercury I think—

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although people and things are always disappearing behind it, and although these wonderfully large animal eyes stare back out at you.

Carolyn Stoloff

LETTER FROM INDIANA

yes, I think of him at times
like today planting chrysanthemums
in the window box, I looked out
at hay in a passing truck
and thought *his hay?*

there's football on local FM
I keep it on
the cresting cheers the choppy voice
keep me alert at the bindery

I'm learning to letter spines
with gold leaf it's tight work

between innings, farm bulletins . . .
I think of him then
when I get up, I'm stiff
it's too soon . . . I've begun
to reassess my goals
I want a studio

tackling woodcuts at home—portraits
ploughed faces like peach pits
I'm getting the knack
it feels good to gouge

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yes, I ran into him
a gusty September noon
at the bottom something stirred
sponge-full of what was soaked in
from our few meetings

between us, strange jumbled clues
dead leaves in twisters

a spark? perhaps

I make too much of it

so little left

of fall since then I've heard
nothing
an austerity of choice

Peter Schjeldahl

HITCHHIKER

Mannerly courthouses on mannerly squares
do not me please
I am the demon hitchhiker
with cold eyes set in my nomad cheeks

By the weeds fringing your town cannon
I recline reading damned French poets
whose energy is pyromania
and phosphorence in your residential streets

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You are complicated and smart and cunning
more than I, who am simple as light
and foolishly innocent and stammering
until in motion I assume malevolent guise

Swooping amongst you I stack in imagination
your corpses like a fund drive for death
in your green public park and leave
your legendary village depopulated and stinking

Out in the country as I pass your cattle
topple over peacefully feet in the air
and your creeks run poisonous and birds
plop matter-of-factly out of the air

Behind me a great serenity spreads
as with an epic rustling your flowers compete
with each other for places to lie down
and then everything is lying down, including

your buildings and trees collapsing soundlessly
because no one is there to hear them
and soon flatness is the prevailing condition
as a precision earthquake irons out your mountains

So you are dead with no one to mourn you
but I will write a few lines for you, maybe
Oh you'd be mad at me if you could find me
but I'm on the move and your ghosts are slow

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Ross Wetzsteon

SAM SHEPARD: ESCAPE ARTIST

Novelists, poets, painters, and composers are frequently "discovered" years, decades, even centuries, after their deaths. But with the single exception of Georg Büchner, no great playwright has ever gone unrecognized in his own time. The reason for this, of course, is that theatre is the most social of the arts—the playwright's vision, no matter how "difficult" or "ahead of its time," must strike his audience with a sense of immediacy.

In seeming contradiction, one of the aspects of genius is to alter the conventions of the art, and thus, in a sense, to create a new audience. But the fact that this happens far more quickly in theatre than in the other arts can be demonstrated by the work of Samuel Beckett—when *Waiting for Godot* opened in New York in 1956, it was greeted with utter bewilderment by even our most astute critics, yet within a decade even college freshmen realized it was a radically simple play, that Beckett's apparent difficulty was less the result of adding layers of complexity than of subtracting almost everything we had thought of as essential to theatre.

Sam Shepard, whose first plays were produced before he was twenty, has also radically expanded our theatrical consciousness, and while for many years his plays seemed inaccessible to all but a small Off-Off-Broadway coterie, gradually he too created his own audience. And recognition of his stature has begun to follow. Although he has never had a Broadway production, in 1979 he won the Pulitzer Prize for *Buried Child*, and his most recent play, *True West*, finally makes it clear that Shepard, at the age of 37, is already, with Eugene O'Neill, one of the two greatest playwrights in the history of the American theatre.

To appreciate properly *True West*—Shepard's first play since receiving the Pulitzer, and, not so ironically, a work dealing in part with the corruption of artistic vision by mass culture—it is first necessary to understand why his work was so long mistakenly regarded as obscure.

Shepard's plays can be divided roughly into three categories. First were the early plays, mostly one-acts, from 1963 to the mid-

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seventies, "vibrations" the poet Michael McClure has called them, abstract collages consisting largely of lyrical monologues, stunning stage imagery, and a sense of paranoid despair, but devoid of conventional characters or stories. The second group includes parables of the ways the artist must pursue his emotional identity and spiritual freedom even if it results in isolation and betrayal, the ways the poet-visionary is simultaneously essential and intolerable to his society. Finally, there are Shepard's two great "family plays," *Curse of the Starving Class* and *Buried Child*, in which the hero, after his visionary quest, returns home to discover whether his new found knowledge can redeem his past—and that of his country. (Dividing Shepard's work into superficial categories like "the cowboy plays" or "the rock plays," as most critics do, mistakes subject matter for thematic obsession—a crucial distinction in understanding Shepard's vision of theatre.)

The difficulty most theatregoers had with the first group of plays, the abstract collages, was that they didn't seem to be "about" anything—that is, unlike most plays, they weren't about their characters (who didn't seem recognizable, who didn't have that bundle of traits which we add together and label personality), and they weren't about their stories (which seemed random, disconnected, even non-existent). But once one realized that these plays were about pure emotional, psychological, or spiritual states—presented directly to the audience, conveyed in image and tone rather than packaged in "character" and "story"—they became as lucid as dreams. As critic Michael Smith once wrote of Shepard's work: "It's like real life. You can't tell what's going on."

Shepard himself, usually reluctant to discuss his work, has occasionally alluded to this process. In 1974, he told a *Theatre Quarterly* interviewer: "The fantastic thing about theatre is that it can make something be seen that's invisible, and that's where my interest in theatre is—that you can be watching this thing happening with actors and costumes and light and set and language, and even plot, and something emerges from beyond that, and that's the image part that I'm looking for, that's the sort of added dimension." And in *Angel City*, when the producer asks the screenwriter to doctor his script, the screenwriter replies that it doesn't need a new character or a new story angle, but something else, something magical, some "force." And it is precisely this force, this "added dimension," that distinguishes Shepard's plays.

"Incident after incident," Elizabeth Hardwick has written of Shepard's work, "each growing out of the other, united in a chain of

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significant motivation, of cause and effect—moments of human destiny strung out like beads on a string. This is what we mean, perhaps, when we say we 'understand' a work of literary art. Yet each decade brings us the conviction that this order is no longer present to the serious writer. . . .The episodic, the obscurely related, the collection of images, moods: connections in fiction and also in drama have become like those of poetry. Tone and style hold the work together, create whatever emotional effect it will have on us." Jacques Levy, who directed several early Shepard productions, put it more simply: "Sam is more interested in *doing* something to audiences than in saying something to them." Shepard's plays are not about what takes place on the stage, in short, but about what takes place in the audience. For if you leave the theatre not understanding the events, you also leave—and this is Shepard's great achievement—feeling the emotions they aroused.

Shepard has thus challenged the conventions of theatre as provocatively as Brecht or Beckett (this will seem hyperbolic only to those who haven't seen the profound impact his style has had on the younger playwrights of our noncommercial theatre—and his characteristically American anti-intellectualism explains why he has done so without an accompanying theoretical superstructure. To put it obliquely: as Shepard wrote in *La Turista*, symptoms are "things that show on the outside what the inside might be up to"—and it is his genius to provide us not with the symptoms but with the disease, not with the outside but with the inside. To put it more theoretically: Shepard's theatre creates a new vision of space (emotional rather than physical), a new vision of time (immediate rather than continuous), a new vision of character (spontaneous rather than coherent), and a new vision of story (consciousness rather than behavior).

In one of the rare comments on his own work, he wrote in the introduction to *Angel City*: "Instead of the idea of a 'whole character' with logical motives behind his behavior which the actor submerges himself into, he should consider instead a fractured whole with bits and pieces of character flying off the central theme. In other words, more in terms of collage construction or jazz improvisation."

Difficult? On the contrary, seeing his plays is precisely as easy as listening to music—and it's no wonder, not only because so many of his characters are musicians, but because he once wanted to be a rock star. "My work is not written in granite," he says. "It's like playing a piece of music. It goes out in the air and dissolves forever." Difficult? On the contrary, we respond to his plays not by

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interpreting their plots or analyzing their characters or dissecting their themes, but simply by experiencing their resonance.

On the surface, for example, *Icarus's Mother* seems to be about a group of people on a beach picnic watching an airplane which suddenly crashes into the sea—a pointless anecdote. But the dominant mood of tension, felt by the audience rather than stated by the characters, transforms the play into a paranoid poem about the threat of nuclear destruction. In *Chicago*, bathtub yodeling, fantasies about fishing, and breathing exercises convey the anguish of a failed love affair—never explicitly stated in the narration but suffusing every moment of the apparently random text. The two acts of *La Turista* each show a character treated by doctors, first Mexican witch doctors, then American quacks. Again, the narrative level "doesn't make sense"—it's only when you listen to the emotional tone of the play that you realize it's dealing with the terrifying helplessness with which one realizes one is dying, with which one sometimes wishes to die, with which one, in fact, sometimes wishes to kill—and the resonance of the title takes us from Mexico to Vietnam.

(Although Shepard was accused throughout the sixties of inaccessibility, of privatism, of avoiding politics, of ignoring "the major issues of his time," in addition to nuclear holocaust, sexual warfare, and the fear of death, his work dealt with such themes as murder, ambition, betrayal, suicide, incest, rape, madness, government conspiracy, the corruption of democratic values, the role of myth in sustaining culture, the disintegration of the family, the instability of identity, and, most of all, with the pain of the individual trying to live in a community—a catalogue of concerns far broader in scope than any of the so-called committed writers of his generation.)

The early plays were structured around monologues and images rather than dialogue and narrative. On the surface, Shepard's monologues seem at first to be nothing but pointless ramblings—driving across the desert at night, drowning and turning into a fish, skiing faster and faster until one's body begins to disintegrate. But Shepard realizes that fantasies constitute a great deal of our conscious life, and that they are thus as real as, and often more revealing than, our behavior. When his characters embark on their fantasy soliloquies—and Shepard's exquisite language is both accurate and inventive, colloquial and poetic, earthy and lyrical—they are not confusing us with unrealistic leaps of imagination but directly revealing the reality of their consciousness. In this sense, Shepard, far from being obscure, is the most purely naturalistic

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playwright we have. Like musical improvisations, in which the notes (or in Shepard's case, the words) are not as important as the rhythms and harmonies and sense of spontaneous feeling, Shepard's arias seek to soar into a disembodied freedom, to create emotions beyond rational structure, to induce in both player and audience a trancelike state of grace.

This is not to say that the fantasy/monologues have only private reference. The long monologue at the end of *Curse of the Starving Class*, for instance—broken up and given to two characters, mother and son—is as powerful a statement of the American tragedy as any passage in our literature: "That eagle comes down and picks up the cat in his talons and carries him screaming off into the sky. . . .And they fight. They fight like crazy in the middle of the sky. The cat's tearing his chest out, and the eagle's trying to drop him, but the cat won't let go because he knows if he falls he'll die. And the eagle's being torn apart in midair. The eagle's trying to free himself from the cat, and the cat won't let go. And they come crashing down to earth. Both of them come crashing down. Like one whole thing."

As for Shepard's sense of stage imagery, as the Howard Hughes character says in *Seduced*: "One story's as good as another. It's all in the way you tell it." The way Shepard tells his stories is in flashes of light, leaving a radiant afterimage silhouetted in our minds. At the end of *Red Cross*, the young man stands with his back to the audience —the set and costumes are completely white, and when he suddenly turns to face us, we see a stream of bright red blood trickling down his forehead, an image of horrifying pain no words could evoke. At the end of *La Turista*, the hero races full speed toward the back of the set and crashes through the wall, leaving the outline of his body before our startled eyes, an image of terrorized flight no speech could convey. In the final scene of *Angel City*, slimy green ooze seeps slowly across the stage—who has ever said so much about Los Angeles so succinctly? And as *Melodrama Play* comes to an end, the captor stands over his captive: beaten, tortured, insane with pain, slowly circling the stage on hands and knees, wailing like a dying animal, his mouth dripping with blood, his eyes glazed with death, the victim cries out in long anguished sobs—the most visceral image in our theatre of the brutality of man to man. "If I don't actually get the feeling of it," the Hughes character says, "then there's no point in tellin' it. Am I right?"

The second group of Shepard plays concerns the writer as visionary: sometimes in parable form (the Howard Hughes figure of *Seduced*, the man in *Geography of a Horse Dreamer* who dreams the

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winners of horse races); often obliquely (the musicians in *Melodrama Play*, *Cowboy Mouth*, *Tooth of Crime*, and *Suicide in B Flat*); and twice directly (the screenwriters in *Angel City* and *True West*). One of the characteristic figures of the media century—from Franz Kafka to Woody Allen—has been the artist who publicly exposes his deepest feelings while at the same time ruthlessly concealing his private life. As Shepard has said about his own early work: "I was very uptight about making a whole public thing out of something that you do privately. I felt that by having the play become public, it was almost like giving it away or something."

Shepard's genius has been to see in this theme a metaphor for contemporary life, to transform what could easily become an artist's self-pity into an exploration of our paradoxical need for both individuality and belonging. Unlike most twentieth-century writers, Shepard retains a belief in the necessity, if not the possibility, of heroism—and his hero's greatest challenge is to confront the psychic traumas which result when our culture blurs the distinction between the integrity of the self and the compromises of community.

Again and again in Shepard's plays, the characters are shaman figures—cowboys, criminals, rock stars, screenwriters, or mythic American figures themselves (Paul Bunyan, Mae West, Yahoodi)—who embark on a search for emotional freedom and spiritual identity. (His plays are often referred to as "trips," in fact—not so much the hallucinations of drugs as the quests of myth.) Striving to escape the confinements of the flesh, the family, the culture, his heroes—who frequently refer to themselves as "escape artists"—sometimes reach a momentary ecstasy of self-fulfillment; more often, they are forced to surrender their private vision to the service of public commerce. (In the later plays in particular, the hero's quest is increasingly thwarted. When this hero is a mythic figure from America's past—usually a cowboy—he is victimized by a civilization which turns our history into cultural debris. When he is an artist, he is spiritually kidnapped, his gift corrupted, his soul poisoned. "You got the genius," the gambler tells the dreamer in *Geography*, "somebody else got the power.") In either case, the shaman figure allows Shepard to explore the paradoxes at the core of his consciousness—the contradictory desire for self and community, for separateness and connection, for escape and family. (And the paradoxes contain their *own* paradoxes—for self, separateness, and escape may disorient as well as liberate; and community, connection, and family may nourish as well as confine.)

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Of course the conflict takes place both between and within individuals. Again and again in his work—culminating in the brothers in *True West*—two characters do battle over the turf of the soul, and the shifts of identity, the shifts of power between them, so confusing to the narrative mind, make perfect sense when regarded not as conflicts between characters but as contradictions of the spirit.

In the last few years, the Shepard hero has begun to realize that his adventure, his trip, his quest, eventually and inevitably leads him back to the family—to the place from which he originally escaped. The odyssey, as we've known since the Greeks, is a circle.

Curse of the Starving Class, Shepard's greatest play, the American *Cherry Orchard*, is superficially a melodrama—when we learn that the deed to the house belongs to the man twirling his mustache, we can almost see the pot coming to a boil. But on a deeper level, it is the greatest "family play" since *Long Day's Journey*—the besotted and bankrupt father still dreaming the American dream of redemption tomorrow, the mother in search of a tawdry respectability, the children cursed by their sterile inheritance. The play's dominating images—an empty refrigerator, a lamb infested with maggots—resonate with the mysterious familiarity of religious rituals. But the poignancy and power of the play come from Shepard's recognition that the trip forward ultimately becomes a trip backward, that his hero's quest for spiritual liberation must circle back to its beginnings. He has no choice but to confront his past, to accept his blood and strive to transcend it—he has no choice, yet paradoxically his freedom lies in this very recognition.

"I have American scars on my brain," Shepard has written. But it was only in England—where he lived in the years just before writing his family plays—that he "found out what it really means to be an American. The more distant you are from it, the more the implications of what you grew up with start to emerge. You can't escape, that's the whole thing, you can't. You finally find yourself in a situation where, like that's the way it is—you can't get out of it. But there's always that impulse toward another kind of world . . . ."

Shepard returns to the family in *Buried Child*, and again directly confronts the terrifying contradiction at its core—the fact that it simultaneously defines our being and denies our existence. Vince returns home after a long absence: no one recognizes him—not even his father—and yet he is finally acknowledged as the heir. In a plot that is Greek in its implacability and hayseed in its comedy, his inheritance includes "the dark secret"—the murdered baby buried in

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the garden. But it also includes the even darker question—is the secret his curse or his redemption?

In 1974, Shepard told an interviewer: "I'd like to try a whole different way of writing, which is very stark and not so flashy and not full of a lot of mythic figures and everything and try to scrape it down to the bone as much as possible." *True West* is not only that play at last, but represents another breakthrough for Shepard as well: for the first time he has combined his themes of artistic corruption and family disintegration in one play. And while his other works have been deceptively complex and actually quite simple, *True West* is deceptively simple and actually quite complex—a short, crisp play in which every line reverberates with menace and mystery.

The "story" is more straightforward than anything in Shepard's career. Austin, a successful screenwriter, is house-sitting for his mother in southern California, finishing a project, when he's visited by his brother Lee, a petty thief and aimless wanderer. There's something ominous about Lee—he has his own story to tell, he gradually persuades the reluctant Austin to help him, he sells the resulting script for a bundle. Their identities shift, it seems that Lee is to become the successful screenwriter (the manufacturer of myth), Austin the petty thief and aimless wanderer (the degradation of quest). "Ya think there's room for a real Western these days?" Lee asks Austin. "A true-to-life Western?" The title, even in its irony, tells us that this is that story.

In its theme of the corruption of the artist-shaman by commerce, *True West* echoes *Angel City* and *Geography of a Horse Dreamer*; in its treatment of uncertain identity, it recalls *Melodrama Play*; in its depiction of blood ties and family collapse, it extends *Starving Class* and *Buried Child*. Its dominant symbols—keys (to open doors, to start cars, to escape) and coyotes (predators, howlers in the night, killers of the innocent)—help establish the familiar Shepardian conflict between liberation and danger. Its secondary characters—the polyester producer, the mother and father—help convey the continuing Shepardian conflict between self and community.

But the title provides the basic clues: in Shepard's work, *West* has always symbolized the hope of redemption, as if immersion in the heroic, mythic past could free the spirit from the confinements of civilization. In *Angel City*, he is quite specific: "The West is the 'Looks-Within' place . . . the place for looking inside yourself."

But what of *True*? And what does it say about Shepard's present view of *West*? The plot contains two central mysteries: is Lee's script

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"true," as he claims (and even if so, is it a work of genius or a piece of trash?), and is it "true," as Austin claims, that the producer has agreed to buy it not because it's good but only because Lee has threatened him? Neither mystery is resolved. But ultimately the mysteries are metaphysical. What is the relationship between truth and art? between vision and power? between authenticity and corruption? between experience and expression? between identity and blood? What, in fact, is the relationship between brothers? Or are Austin and Lee two aspects of a single character, seeking to reconcile or to annihilate contradictory halves of a divided personality?

The truth of *True West* lies in these unresolved mysteries themselves—which come together in a final visceral image, a final flash of light, one of Shepard's great *coups de theatre*. At the very end of the play, we see the two brothers silhouetted in the darkness, hunched over, arms spread, confronting one another in rage and fear, squared off in murderous threat and terrified self-protection, each stalking the other in an electric moment frozen in time. "Lights go slowly to black as the afterimage of the brothers pulses in the dark."

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Leon Botstein

THE VIENNESE CONNECTION

Why has there been a surge of interest in the world of fin-de-siècle Vienna among American intellectuals and scholars, the urbane audience, our fellow consumers of high culture? Carl Schorske's widely reviewed recent book, *Fin de Siècle Vienna* (1980), (which sold over 15,000 hardbound copies just months after its appearance—many more than the most optimistic projections of its publisher) capped off a remarkable array of fin-de-siècle Viennesiana which has come out since the mid-seventies. Consider this sampling: academic works such as William McGrath's *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics* (1974); Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (1973); Alexander Gerschenkron's *An Economic Spurt That Failed* (1977); John Boyer's huge *Political Radicalism in Late Imperial Vienna* (1981); William Johnston's *The Austrian Mind* (1972); in 1980 popular books by Frederic Morton and Joseph Wechsberg and in 1981 Johnston's coffee-table book, *Vienna, Vienna: The Golden Age 1815-1914*; in music a Mahler and Bruckner revival on records and in concert programs, now a dominant factor in musical life; a host of new and reissued biographies and letter collections of Wolf, Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern. In psychology, consider the run of books and magazine pieces in the past two years on the "historical" Freud. In the arts, there was the 1979 "Vienna Moderne" exhibit in New York, Chicago, and Houston and a series of art and coffee-table books on the Vienna Secession, on Vienna's fin-de-siècle architectural innovators, and on Klimt and Schiele.

In the gradual shift during the past several years in architectural fashion from a standardized and vulgarized post-Bauhaus modernism to a so-called "postmodernist" esthetic, buildings with a mixture of ornamentation and structural and functional lines have emerged, reminiscent of the work of two Viennese, Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. Both Philip Johnson's dubious new AT&T building in New York and the successful new building for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, Massachusetts, evoke fin-de-siècle Viennese archi-

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tecture. The latter example does so explicitly with its woodworked interior lights, sculptured inner terracing and Vienna-style furniture.

Curiously, in the 1965 edition of H.W. Janson's standard *History of Art*, the Vienna Secession and Klimt and Schiele are nowhere mentioned. In literature, there have been new paperback editions and theatrical productions of Schnitzler, and a Stefan Zweig centennial conference took place in May, 1981, with a book of essays to follow. There is a growing body of younger American scholarly research on Vienna. Last but perhaps not least, consider the extraordinary appreciation in the price of art and utilitarian objects from the period, especially from the Vienna "Werkstätte" (not to mention thin imitators and copiers). A culinary afterthought: two Viennese restaurants, "Vienna '79" in New York and a smaller offshoot, have become smashing "three-star" successes.

This cultural and historical revival reminds one of the attention given in America to Weimar culture and politics during the sixties and early seventies. About ten years ago, frequent discussions of a "Weimar analogy" for the America of the sixties reflected a fascination with Weimar culture. Between 1960 and 1970 we saw Brecht come into the American scene as a seminal poet, playwright, and theoretician of art, politics, and drama. Ten years ago, interwar German films were in vogue. America was then in an age of esthetic experimentation, with a visible avant-garde in the academy, music, poetry, and drama, an avant-garde often self-consciously reminiscent of Berlin in the 1920s. The sixties and early seventies brought new scholarship on the Weimar period. To many of us who were graduate students in European history during the sixties, the interwar years were engrossing and meaningful. A sense of a Weimar analogy, especially among liberal and radical intellectuals, given the public presence of Herbert Marcuse as symbol of the new politics, helped to draw scholars to neo-Marxism, to the Frankfurt School, to critical theory, to Walter Benjamin, and to the Georg Lukacs of the twenties and thirties. The Bauhaus, with its agenda of artistic modernism and radical social change, attained status as an historical precedent for artists and architects. All that was new, especially with conscience, with daring, with a sharp critique of monopoly capitalism, utilitarianism, bourgeois sanctimoniousness, liberalism, and nationalism, seemed to evoke in the sixties the spirit of the Weimar period. For students, intellectuals, and artists, freedom of expression, an intense and thoroughgoing modern revo-

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lution closely allied with politics, in art, music, theatre, film, and literature, were self-satisfying hallmarks of our age. What remains of the avant-garde (so-called) in 1982 is at best a species of minimalism. In music, the work of Steve Reich and Philip Glass is reductionist, utilizing simplified materials which evoke a dated sense of the "primitive." In painting, the light colors of Judith Pfaff and the expressionist sensibilities of this year's young darling of painting, Julian Schnabel, echo the pre-1914 Berlin Secession, if not the texture and colorings of Kokoschka. The survivors of the mid-twentieth-century avant-garde have lost altogether the links to radical politics; nostalgia and a vague spiritualism are the two residues in today's esthetic.

Beyond art and culture and their relation to politics, the challenge to routine politics in America in the sixties lent cogency to the Weimar analogy. Turmoil in the streets and on campuses about Vietnam and civil rights, the political assassinations, the aggressive, idealistic challenge by the young, with its burgeoning stylistic counterculture, and the sense of chaos in our democratic processes all threatened stability. Activists sought the way for a new society. In 1982, the focus of activist attention is centered (as it has been for over five years) on psychological and individualistic concerns, as was the case in fin-de-siècle Vienna. Our search for growth and change has been turned inward. We have come through a period of intense obsession with self, visible in the career of feminism, the heightened apolitical interest in sexuality, in fame and personality, and in individual economics and material well-being—all phenomena reminiscent of the literary and scientific manias of fin-de-siècle Viennese society.

The extreme polarization by age and by political ideas in the America of twelve years ago evoked good and bad memories of Weimar politics. To some, the Weimar experience contained explicit political lessons. "Uncivilized" political radicalism and extremism in mores (notably in sexual behavior and in the disparagement of monogamous romantic love) might lead to destruction of the very freedoms which made the political and cultural challenge possible. America might, like Weimar, find itself reeling toward the extreme right in a populist surge toward an authoritarianism intent on eradicating the new, the modern, and, by implication, the "decadent." After all, the Nazis considered Weimar culture "decadent" and "nihilist," two words in common usage in the sixties and early seventies. As in Weimar, respectability and

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tradition seemed pitted against seeming decadence and modernism during the sixties. It is ironic that the "new" right which came into power with Reagan and the moral majority repeats similar claims, directed at the memory of the radical sixties, America's "Weimar" period.

By the later Nixon-Ford years, the political struggles and artistic adventures which had given impetus to such warnings from the American center and the right were at an end. Yet some final and predictably commercial symptoms of the American romance with Weimar continued to appear, such as the Broadway musical and film, *Cabaret*. Its portrayal of Weimar was a national box-office success even in a moment of decline in American politics and of intergenerational strife.

Those elements of our cultural life analogous to Weimar have vanished. Weimar is passé. The avant-garde in art, music, and theatre, even in poster art or self-consciously political film and theatre, is quiet. Brecht has receded into academe, Fritz Lang's films have lost their student cult, the Bauhaus has become a seemingly dated though notable artistic movement. Weimar, like radicalism itself, is absent from the campus culture. Peter Brook has Gurdjieff; Rennie Davis, the Maharaji; Bob Dylan, Jesus; and Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, merely themselves and their high incomes as celebratory objects.

Our futurist, often optimistic, enthusiasms of the sixties have lapsed. Even the tame heir to political activism, our vigilance against political corruption since Watergate, has dissipated into political withdrawal and ennui in 1982. The styles of modern culture in the art, dress, and architecture of the sixties have become transmuted into varieties of nostalgia for a pre-World War I world. Consider, for example, the recent odyssey into oblivion of these two Weimar-like cultural phenomena: popular and rock songs with critical political lyrics, and the stand-up comedians of social and political sarcasm, both black and white. With the passing of these often commercially successful Weimar-like trends, the academic and broadly based intellectual curiosity in our presumptive Weimar antecedents has dwindled as well.

Widely held self-conscious historical analogies illuminate in special ways the "leitmotifs" of any period. The Jacobin claim to Roman origins in the French Revolution, parodied by Büchner in *Danton's Death*, and nineteenth-century Germany's and eighteenth-century England's romance with classical antiquity, visible in the

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historical and philological scholarship of those times, are obvious examples of national, political, and cultural self-images projected through significant historical analogies.

Clearly, the Weimar analogy was quasi-historical and superficial. Walter Rathenau and Matthias Erzberger were not John Kennedy and Martin Luther King; Bob Dylan was not Kurt Weill. In Weimar Germany, a new postmonarchial, fragile, and poorly conceived democratic republic struggled in the wake of military defeat, reparations, inflation, and world depression. The contrasting economic and political circumstances of America in the sixties made a serious argument by historical analogy difficult, at best.

The accuracy demanded by professional historians who maintain the conceit of objectivity fails to dispel facile analogies like the Weimar analogy of ten years ago. Some dimension of the past becomes present myth. In the eighties, the particular past that fascinates the present has shifted from Berlin of the twenties to fin-de-siècle Vienna. Clearly, one must ask, who draws these analogies? What within the mechanisms of the recruitment, training, and publishing of scholars and their work gives rise to an apparent concentration of effort on a particular problem or era and, consequently, the shifts from one to another? What within the world of journalism, political and cultural, sustains a popular fascination with a past culture? What, finally, within the careers of gifted authors like E.L. Doctorow leads them to turn from political contexts (*The Play of Daniel*) rooted in ideological commitments reminiscent of the interwar "Weimar" years to the estheticized pastiche of the fin-de-siècle (*Ragtime*)? What will follow in this short argument begs these critical questions, and offers only a general explanation to a surface, but broadly perceived, trend permeating the borders of scholarship, journalism, and the arts.

Experimentation and the modern, if not an attraction to the decadent in a context of radical, active politics, drew us back to Weimar. The absence of politics, a gradual social fragmentation in our nation, the decline of America as a world power, the retreat into self, a selective reclaiming of tradition, nostalgia, estheticism, and a profound, passive pessimism now draw us nearer to fin-de-siècle Vienna.

Curiously, older scholars like Carl Schorske have only partially recognized the significance of their own drift to an interest in Vienna. Schorske describes his attraction to Vienna as an extension of his interest in the breakdown of liberal polity, in the origins of an

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antirational modernism. True, he notes the alienation from politics of the intellectual in Vienna, a non-Weimar-like phenomenon. Despite his recognition of an ahistorical self-consciousness in the modernism in literature, psychology, art, and music evident in Schnitzler, Freud, Schoenberg, and Klimt, he falls back on the idea that the alluring and lasting significance of Viennese culture is its novelty, its break with the past, its generational revolt. Since he dates his own interest in Vienna from the height of radical politics in the sixties, and mistakenly, for example, identifies the Mahler revival with the Berkeley student movement (it occurred on a major scale significantly later), he underestimates the significance of both the Vienna of 1900 and the power of the analogy with America today. The retreat from politics and society, the philistine character of middle-class life in Vienna eighty years ago, and the hesitant, if not the nostalgic, dimension in what he celebrates as the modernism of that period, are all understated. If one steps away from the notion advocated by Schorske and other American scholars about Vienna, from its apparent role in the start of a new age in culture and politics, one can recognize telling dimensions of fin-de-siècle Vienna which illuminate our newfound attraction for that period, our shift away from Weimar, and our own current condition.

Rather than view fin-de-siècle Vienna as a seedbed of a lasting revolution in esthetic attitudes or as the birthplace of a new politics beyond liberalism and nineteenth-century socialism, two movements which do not seem overly to fuel our interest in Vienna circa 1900, one ought to assess the Vienna analogy by those sustained attributes in both our culture and that of the past. Rather, consider the rejection of politics altogether; a synthetic, eclectic, new but yet decorative, even monumental, esthetic, overtly tied to past models; a pervading sense of a collective futility and the rush to self-knowledge, private spheres, mere style, and uncamouflaged personal gratifications.

Comparisons between Austria-Hungary and Vienna before 1914 and contemporary America are not new. Franz Werfel, in the mid-thirties, saw both nations as carriers of higher values of civilization and humanity, capable of suppressing the narrow, irrational, and passionate drives of race and nation. The true Austrian was to be a "new human being," a "teacher of men," who "should be as a light" to those still prisoners of ordinary political values. The melting pot of America struck Werfel as analogous to the Hapsburg Empire. Werfel's Austrian supranational vision

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failed. It did so in part because of the curiously abstract, non-political, and ahistorical self-image contained in the Austrian and Viennese supranational ideal, a characteristic reflected even in Werfel's own comparison. But what of the presumptive American counterpart, today, when we find ourselves recalling with affection Vienna before 1914? Is our culture, like Vienna of 1900, expressive of our memory of, rather than our confidence in, ourselves as a towering international power?

In international politics, the broadest context for an historical analogy, pathetic if somewhat cheap comparisons occur. In 1900, Austria-Hungary appeared to be a world power. But it was viewed by its fellow world powers as essentially second-rate, on the verge of internal dissolution, burdened with a huge, cumbersome, and weak military and internal bureaucracy and a faltering, underdeveloped economy. The Hapsburg defeat at Sadowa in 1866 and the loss of Austrian-controlled provinces in Italy pierced the veil of Hapsburg power. Since Vietnam, America has lost credibility, despite appearances and official claims, as an effective world power with maneuverability. It appears to be a lumbering giant, like Austria-Hungary, incapable of swift, decisive action. Its status in the international economy is steadily weakening as a result of its dependence on OPEC, the vulnerability of the dollar, and the aging of its industrial capacity. The contrast of apparent power with actual ineffectiveness (for example, the Iran rescue escapade, impotence in the wake of Polish repression, inability to marshall international support for our official views of South America, South Africa and the Middle East) also marked the huge Hapsburg Empire in the decades before its collapse. The failure of serious, effective national leadership then and now can be compared. The utility of the old Emperor Francis Joseph as a symbol of unity reminds one of the fading but continuing myth of the power of the presidency to hold us together and lead us forward in the face of disintegration and decline. Reagan's initial success, one of appearance, in reasserting the power and magnetism of the office of the president and the glamor of America has faltered severely. The economic chaos and the bankruptcy of a polity based on a romantic and wrongheaded version of a splendid American past highlights the irony of powerlessness in the face of all the trappings of might all too harshly for comfort.

Internally, turn-of-the-century Vienna mirrored the fragmentation of an empire. Politics were dominated by competing

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nationalities tearing away at the appearance of a unified monarchy. Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Germans all made even the impotent parliament of the monarchy an uncontrollable stage for brawls, arguments, and inaction. Mark Twain wrote one of the many hilarious, satiric descriptions of chaotic sessions of the parliament in Vienna at the turn of the century. Beyond the question of nationalities, conflict among social classes and political groups in turn-of-the-century Vienna was severe. Socialists, Christian-Socialists, pan-Germans, conservative monarchists, and liberals all made a mockery of any claim to national unity.

Compare America. Ethnicity has successfully outdistanced the myth of common citizenship. Are we not a collection of ethnic, social, regional, and economic factions, all acting on narrow grounds of self-interest with a weak sense of the common public good? Our recent economic deterioration further separates groups in the nation by economic status, race, and region. The extent to which we have strengthened our factional identities, often only as members of professional or vocational cadres, has seriously weakened the capacity of the political process to generate the feeling that we are all part of one body politic with comparable political and social ideals. The resulting character of our domestic politics is analogous to the Austrian and Viennese predecessor: national paralysis in the face of serious economic and social challenges and of declining military power, international prestige, and confidence in leadership.

On the issue of leadership, turn-of-the-century Vienna, like America in the past decade, was rocked by internal political scandal, involving treason and bribery. Events like the Redl affair revealed corruption and hypocrisy in the civil service and the military. From Watergate and Abscam to Reagan appointees Allen and Donovan, the persistence of mediocrity and venality among politicians has engendered a cynicism about politics worthy of the intellectuals and artists of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

The cultural responses to these comparable political and social conditions of fragmentation, leaderlessness, ineptness, corruption, and general dissolution are understandably similar. Consider the world of music. Mahler and Schoenberg, two of the most vaunted innovators from the turn of the century, were in their own estimate not so self-consciously revolutionary or modern as we might like to think, especially in Schoenberg's case before 1914. Schoenberg's early compositions in particular reflected an effort to reclaim the forms and techniques of musical tradition from the grasp of a clichéd and

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vulgar late romanticism. Schoenberg's public demonstration of a self-proclaimed revolution in esthetics did not take place at the fin-de-siècle but rather during the interwar years. Mahler rejected, for himself, the more forward-looking "total work of art" of Wagner, the opera, and the new political, programmatic aspects of music. As a committed, re-creating performer, he saw his creative work as part of a sustained continuum from the past, despite the modernist dimensions of his work so frequently cited today. Mahler's contemporaries saw confusion, vulgarity, and incompetence in his work rather than "newness" or "modernity." Bruckner took refuge in traditional Catholicism. Mahler sought bittersweet inspiration in so-called banal popular themes, in an eclectic use of popular dance and band sounds, in Mozartian irony, in the symphony and in the song. Schoenberg, who started under the sway of Brahms, saw the twelve-tone system as a renewal of rigor and clarity in music, as a refuge from the cheap sentimentality and decadence of eclectic and imitative contemporary music making. Theirs was a traditional and backward-looking modernism of sorts, one in search of a classicism, and a wholly apolitical one. Compare what has happened in modern music in America. John Harbison and George Crumb, two major composers of our time, seek an almost sentimental, if not wistful, modernism by generating accessible, pleasing effects and sonorities. Other composers like David del Tredici, George Rochberg, and Frederick Rzewski have rejected the avant-garde and seek artistic solace in quotes from the past, and in older idioms and styles. Nostalgia reigns supreme in our musical audience. Like the Viennese audience of 1900, the concert-going public today has an increasingly short tolerance for the new, and relishes the older repertoire—baroque, classical, and romantic works and sounds.

In the plastic arts, the interest in Viennese painting and crafts reveals a comparable apolitical and regressive attitude towards the new and the future. Much of what is now popular about Klimt and the Vienna Secession is their blend of ornament and symbolism, their subtle prettiness. An eclectic effort to decorate every detail of life, from lettering to tableware to buildings, pervaded Viennese art. The art of that period, notably the portraiture, is personal and inward-looking, rarely revolutionary in artistic technique or style. It is only superficially "modern." It is easy to look at and not too dangerous. In America, the craft movement and the growth of interest in weaving and ceramics had political significance ten years ago in its implicit rejection of industry, the city, and capitalism. It

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has now become a consumer success, a fetish of decoration. The art nouveau and art deco taste of today reflects our desire to cover with color and intricate designs the ugliness of the reality around us. We seek, like the Viennese, to render even the mundane "esthetic." Arts and crafts insulate us from political and social conflict, as they did in Vienna.

The art of fin-de-siècle Vienna, like its music, is as distant spiritually from Weimar (Käthe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz, and Max Beckmann) as are minimal painting and the work of Frank Stella; the photography of Ansel Adams, Harry Callahan, and Jan Groover is likewise distant from the socially aware work of past masters Walker Evans, Paul Strand, and Lewis Hine, not to mention painters Ben Shahn, William Gropper, and Peter Blume or Picasso's *Guernica*.

If the apolitical, ahistorical trends and general alienation of intellectuals from politics and society in the Vienna of 1900 bred a nonpolitics and a weak socialism, a passion for "art for art's sake" and a fascination with the private and the psychological, so too can one see in America an analogy in our obsession with new therapies, family therapy among them, with personal growth and development, private perceptions, and one's own personal odyssey in life. We are in the midst of a national antimodern effort to render our lives conventionally pretty and elegant, at ease and comfortable. We seek to avoid contemplating structural issues and concern ourselves with cosmetic effects that, with the help of a nostalgic touch, hide severe difficulties for the moment, which, after all, may be all that is of interest to us.

The educated middle class of Vienna was absorbed in *Gemütlichkeit*, in a drive, as Stefan Zweig put it, for security and respectability. It was reacting in part to the politicl and economic disorders of the 1870s, as we are reacting to comparable difficulties in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. The Viennese bourgeois was driven by a passion for consuming culture and appearing civilized without reference to politics or society. Theatre, opera, concerts, poetry, art, popular presentations of knowledge, and books, especially the historical novel and the popular biography, flourished. Merely on the basis of the new, expanded sections in our major newspapers on the home, culture, and "living," it is apparent that we too are a nation not of producers of new cultures but of cannibalizers of old culture, consumers dependent on the expertise of ever more powerful cultural journalists and critics. Our pessimism about

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future politics and social questions reveals itself in our passion for "Mostly Mozart" and "Basically Bach" festivals, for antiques, old paintings, collectibles of all sorts, for popular biographies and presentatons of high culture—from Carl Sagan and Julian Jayne—and in our passion for books on personal health and sports. Ours may be the first culture that consumes with marked preference high culture from earlier ages as opposed to the work of its own time, the success of a few lesser novels and the economic worth behind the sale and valuation of new works of the plastic arts notwithstanding. Even there, between auctions and the rapid ascent in value of the work of dead masters, the past dominates.

This pattern of smug and self-satisfied cultural sophistication in the midst of political hopelessness and national mistrust and boredom constitutes the real Vienna analogy. Even if one contests the picture sketched here of the apparent innovators of fin-de-siècle Vienna as perhaps less forward-looking than backward-looking and traditional, we cannot fail to see ourselves (we who are certainly no Hofmannstahl, Freud, or Schoenberg) as latter-day Viennese. We absorb ourselves in a culture of the past and immerse ourselves in our private lives. We feel and act without hope when it comes to politics and social questions. Idealism has become the vocation of fools who fail to see the end of American power, the scarcity of resources, the final bankruptcy of science and technology, the corruption of business and bureaucracy. We live, as did the fin-de-siècle Viennese, with a sense of the dissolution of past values, in what Hermann Broch called a "value-vaccuum." We surround ourselves with artifacts of art and culture; we seek to enjoy ourselves, despite our nagging sense that despair and doom will rapidly overcome us.

The tragedy of the Vienna analogy, of our fascination with that period, is not visible in the simple awe we feel for the giants of that culture. Rather it lies in the possibility that the generations ahead of us, much like those that followed fin-de-siècle Vienna, will grow up under our tutelage not as mere esthetes, comfortable middle-class culturemongers, and political illiterates, but as potential victims of the extreme political domination and the demise of freedom which may follow. The lesson of the current romance with Vienna and the Vienna analogy—if there is one—is that we must assert the future, regain control of our politics, and rededicate ourselves to the tasks of politics and society. It may be, as one historian has noted, perhaps

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facetiously, that we ought to watch with some self-critical care the current growth of interest in Byzantine studies.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, himself a product of fin-de-siècle Vienna, observed:

> One can imagine an animal angry, frightened, unhappy, happy, startled. But hopeful: And why not?
>
> A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? — And *what* can he not do here? — How can I do it? — How am I supposed to answer this?
>
> Can only those hope who can talk? Only those who have mastered the use of a language. That is to say, the phenomena of hope are modes of this complicated form of life.

Before we go overboard in our appreciation for a fascinating and alluring era and its city, with its fabulous cultural life, both new and old, we should contemplate its aftermath. The Viennese model (in the spirit of Franz Werfel) of cultural and artistic sophistication and inspiration without a decisive commitment to politics and society ought not be emulated.

The staggering explosion and eventual silence which followed in Europe, especially in Vienna and Austria in the years after the turn of the century, cannot be permitted to overtake us in the decades ahead. In contrast to our Viennese antecedents, let us heed, in speech and act, Wittgenstein's insight, and shed the political and social hopelessness of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

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Bernard Crick

KOESTLER'S KOESTLER

In 1942 George Orwell wrote about a new breed of writers who were specifically "political writers," men whose best writing was to be found in that esthetically unfavored subject matter. Among them he numbered Malraux, Borkenau, Silone, and his new friend Arthur Koestler.

Koestler has been almost as difficult to come to terms with as Orwell, even though, born only two years later, in 1905, he is still very much alive and has written copiously about himself and his "career"—he is fond of the word *career*. Admiration for both men is tinged with uncertainty as to quite what we are admiring; and some, whose wounds still ache from old cuts inflicted by one or the other of them, would deny their merit as writers at all, or call it grossly inflated. Part of the difficulty of appraising Koestler is that he has written so much and in a variety of forms on widely varying subjects, most of which stir strong reactions. A bibliography lists thirty published books.

Now Koestler seems to help us by providing a selection of his own writings. What is it in fact? "An omnibus," he says, which the *Concise Oxford* tells him "is a volume containing several stories, plays, etc., by an author published at a low price to be within the reach of all." That it is, a fine piece of publishing, incidentally, but in one respect it is a curious omnibus, for it is not "the best of Koestler," a selection of works as a whole, but rather heavily edited abridgements from all the thirty books. He has had to reduce 9000 pages to 700, so to 7.5 percent of the total, he tells us with mock pedantry, obviously and understandably pleased with his own professional skill with the knife, even on himself.

This book must at least be his own view of his achievement, especially as at first glance it includes something of everything: Zionist, communist, anticommunist, philosopher, scientist, pamphleteer, deep pessimist, profound optimist, unsatisfied Yogi and frustrated commissar. Can we now judge whether he is a bourgeois hedgehog or a natural aristocrat of foxes? Whether he should be remembered and respected more for his philosophic and scientific speculation of later years or for his earlier political

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writings? And did he just have two good novels in him—which came out, *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure*—or has his abandonment of the novel as a form in favor of scientific speculations about human nature and destiny both lost him an audience and diminished his art?

In some ways, however, this book makes general judgments more difficult, not less. For he tries to kill two very different birds with the same stone: the omnibus is both a remarkably fair selection from his published books (including those essays republished in book form) and a substitute autobiography. It is fair because the bulk of these books fall into his postwar scientific, postpolitical period; and yet if he values them more, he still gives half of this book to the political period, in professional deference, one suspects, to the majority of his readers. It is a substitute autobiography in that the extracts, whether from novels or nonfiction, are printed in chronological order, each with an interesting headnote explaining how and why each book came to be written. But the balance of extracts is only a careful editorial compromise. It must be wrong from one or another point of view: the demands of a truthful autobiography or the demands of a good selection of what he thinks to be his own best or most important work.

So Koestler has not done the critic's work for him, or even made a clear first bid. The claim he makes on our attention is still enigmatic. The character of the writings needs closer examination before we can accept or reject the younger Koestler or the older one, Orwell's "political writer" or the scientific writer who is proud to insert a footnote on the third page of his preface to relate Sir Peter Medawar's conviction that reading Koestler led him to reconsider "the conventional Darwinian explanation of evolution." Indeed the alarming thought could occur, as some of Orwell's friends claimed of him, perhaps out of discomfort with the content of his writings, that it is actually the life of the man that is more memorable than the writings. To say this would obviously be to disparage Koestler's writings, but it is not a view to be dismissed out of hand. For his public life has been extraordinary. In 1925 he dropped out as a student of physics in Vienna, having lost his faith in determinism, and left for the Holy Land as already a member of a Zionist dueling fraternity and of Jabotinsky's League of Zionist Activists (the forerunner of Begin's Irgun). Life in a kibbutz was both too hard and too narrow, but with youthful effrontery and skill, he began his journalism. He became Middle East correspondent for the Ullstein Press which, in 1929, sent him to Paris, and in 1930 he was recalled

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to Berlin and, at twenty-five, made science editor of the group. He was the only journalist on the Graf Zeppelin's flight to the North Pole, which brought his name into prominence. Disenchanted with both pure science and Zionism, Marxism was to be his next quest for certainty or "search for synthesis." He joined the Communist Party, visited the USSR, worked for the Party, was a war correspondent in Spain as an undercover Communist, infiltrated onto the books of the British liberal *News Chronicle*. Identified and imprisoned by the Nationalists, he was saved from execution by a mistaken, popular British campaign to save "British journalists." In a cell in Spain, communism evaporated, and a knowing, wise, and deadly anti-communism succeeded it, first *Spanish Testament* of 1937, and then the great achievement and fame of *Darkness at Noon* of 1941. By this time he had escaped from a French concentration camp via Portugal and reached Britain illegally, where he was at first imprisoned as an illegal immigrant and then set to work in the Pioneer Corps digging trenches and tank traps. As a connoisseur of prison life, his praise of English prisons deserves remembering at a time when the notorious "H-Block" is in fact a veritable bed of roses compared to grim, stone-flagged old Pentonville. All things are, indeed, relative.

For a world view, he substitutes at first a passionate Englishness, becomes the kind of central European emigré who becomes almost more English than the English, displaying tolerance, love of tradition, and good political manners, but an ultimate skepticism about worthwhile political change. Personally kind and helpful towards less fortunate fellow refugees as his own fortunes repaired, yet he had little sympathy or interest in refugee politics, all those dreams of a return. For a brief while he was like that celebrated old lady of Boston: "Why travel? I'm here." Yet after all that risk, pain, and suffering, three times he was rendered destitute and many times close to violent death or long imprisonment, his individualism seems to have revolted at the bureaucracy, drabness, and puritanical ideology of Attlee's Britain—to the personal annoyance of Orwell who positively reveled in it and who saw Koestler, perhaps unfairly, as a backslider from democratic socialism (whereas Koestler would probably have argued that he was a writer, simply moving on to different themes, even grander and more complex). So although naturalized as a British subject, from 1948 to 1952 he traveled restlessly, acclaimed but unsettled, between "Island Farm" in New Jersey and "Verte Rive" near Fontainebleau. Freedom was often his theme, but now equality was a threat to freedom and not, as in *The Gladiators*, its necessary condition. But then he finally settled in

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England, though with much intermittent world traveling on the lecture and conference circuit, albeit now a very critical admirer of his new homeland as shown in a brilliant and prescient series of essays in the early 1960s on national character and national decline (now extracted and retitled "The Lion and the Ostrich"). And the self-consciously big books began: *The Trail of the Dinosaur* (1955), *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing View of the Universe* (1959), *The Lotus and the Robot* (1961), *The Act of Creation* (1964), *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967), *The Case of the Midwife Toad* (1971), *The Roots of Coincidence* (1972), *The Thirteenth Tribe* (1976), and *Janus: A Summing Up* (1978). Why, then, has he not summed up in a full-scale autobiography, rather than this compromise volume? Or at least completed the series of the autobiographical books, *Dialogue With Death* (1941), *Scum of the Earth* (1941), *Arrow in the Blue* (1952), and *Invisible Writing* (1954)? He anticipates this obvious question, saying that despite the pressure of friends and publishers, his life ceased after 1940 to be a "typical [sic] case history of a central European member of the educated middle class born in the first years of our century," and therefore ceased to be "of any public interest." The nonsequitur is startling! Even if we grant that the Anglicization, indeed Atlanticization, of such a typical central European bourgeois is of no public interest, the comment must be made that the professional writer slides from one sense of *public* to another, from his own former life as a public activist into what about him may be interesting to his reading public, publicly interesting. This is a cross that great men have to bear. Before 1940 he was predominantly, but far from exclusively, interested in public, political affairs; and "after 1940" (although most certainly he predates the change of emphasis), predominantly interested in strange, difficult, and important borderlands of psychology, physiology, biology, and philosophy. But his shift of emphasis was far from exclusive: witness "The God That Failed" essay; his attempt in 1946-47 to found a "League for Human Rights" with Gollancz, Orwell, Bertrand Russell, and others; his roles in P.E.N., UNESCO, and the Campaign for Cultural Freedom; his attacks on national and military misuse of atomic power; and his prominent role in the campaign in Great Britain for the abolition of capital punishment. Surely he cannot seriously mean that there is no public activity worth writing about after 1940, that the earlier connection between public life and private life (virtually forced on the prewar European intelligentsia) is severed by settling in Britain? What he really means is that his private life comes to be more valuable to him than public, political activities, and that he

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finds the subject matter of his new books in contemplation, rather than in action, or in reading about science, not in recounting his own experiences, as in *Spanish Testament* and *Arrow in the Blue*, or even in imaginatively reshaping them, as in *The Gladiators* and *Darkness at Noon*. And also he is probably saying, with the decent reticence of a distinguished English man of letters living in Montpelier Square, SW7, that he simply does not want to write about his private life.

In some ways one sympathizes. Not through Marx, not through Einstein, but through Freud, the reading public has grown naughty and demands more than Koestler would wish to offer or probably allow. Improper and irrelevant demands should, of course, be frustrated. The private life of some writers and most scientists, even many statesmen, may in fact have little relationship with the meaning of their published work; and even accounts of how and why they produce their work can be irrelevant if there are no ambiguities of meaning or intent to be clarified by accounts of antecedents. But these are hard conditions to meet, particularly for writers like Koestler and Orwell who have both become a legend in their lifetime and have, albeit on different occasions, and for specific purposes (not to help future biographers), written a lot about themselves, using their own legend, in some of their best works. To be fair, Koestler has allowed a biography of himself to be commissioned and is cooperating with it, although he does not mention this in his preface.

As someone who was careful to insist, before beginning work on *Orwell*, on a contractual right to see all papers and to publish anything, I would be fascinated to know what the conditions of the Koestler commission were. Certainly, a biography in anyone's lifetime is difficult—I go no further, for widows and heirs to copyright are not always easy either. Nonetheless, it is strange that, having written so much and so interestingly in an autobiographic vein in his "red" period, he has not done so in, as it were, his "blue" period; and has, as I've said, produced this fascinating but nonetheless compromised, commentated, chronological anthology. One sympathizes if he has a distaste for doing a Bertie Russell and writing so frankly and egocentrically about his amours, marriages, and quarrels, as well as his ideas and activities, as if the feelings of others do not matter a damn if self-revelation is complete. But if so purely intellectual, why not an intellectual autobiography? Perhaps the difficulty is not one of either writing to conceal or needing to parade a private life, but a painful uncertainty about where his real achievement lies in his public life as a writer, a contradiction between his ideal image

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and his actual best work. A clue may be found in his editing of the anthology: he confines himself to books or essays republished in books, so practically nothing of his vast journalistic output appears. But for most of his life Koestler has been a journalist, in Zionist, Communist, and anti-Communist phases, still an occasional reviewer, since the middle 1940s able to choose his journals and write thoughtful feature articles rather than commissioned stories, but nonetheless a journalist, reporter, professional writer, in the best senses through and through. This editing out of examples of early routine journalism may simply be because this anthology is, after all, meant to show his writing at its best. But then its chronological, quasi-autobiographic appearance is publicly misleading, perhaps even self-deceptive. I would like to see examples of how he did write as an Ullstein journalist and then as a party hack—not to demean him, but simply because his life was so interesting. And he may underestimate the reporter's craft, as if it diminishes the thinker's status.

His prewar books told in sturdy prose fascinating stories about his own adventures. When he comes to write in English, it is a workmanlike, even at times lively, prose, occasionally even florid, but certainly with little of the vivid feeling for a new language shown by Conrad or the sharp simplicity of Orwell's use of his native tongue. Personally, I don't find much difference between his own first writing in English and the earlier translations of his German or French (not Hungarian of course): it is almost as if he modelled his prose on his last translator. Before the war, then, he wrote well about his own experiences and matters arising from them—especially well about extreme psychological states; but he had also written, though no examples here, with some authority on scientific matters as the science correspondent of the biggest German newspaper chain in the 1920s. So when he returns to write about science, though now in books and on themes of his own choosing, he is speculative, most certainly, but not amateur or eccentric; and if he is selective in his use of evidence, he is a good reporter of what "challenging" research and theories he reads: he can both understand and popularize scientific literature. Thus, there is both more continuity in his writing than first appears to be the case or than he is prepared to acknowledge.

Add to this the fact that his novels have all dealt well with the character and ideological contradictions of a central hero or antihero, as well as with extreme situations, but they have shown neither psychological depth nor complexity in the interrelations of the char-

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acters. Indeed, the minor characters are all ideological or social types, neither interacting upon nor modifying each other's characters: they break or bust each other, or some escape and others remain unchanged. Reflective and revealing autobiography, then, beyond telling a good public tale of important and exciting public events, is not likely to be his strongest card as a writer. He may simply be well aware of this—no skeletons to hide, simply an old craftsman's dialectic awareness of his professional strengths and weaknesses. The one clear thread in all the variety of his themes, and linking closely his two periods, is that he has been a professional reporter of mighty themes, but always using his pen for his career, considering carefully his subject matter and his changing audiences.

This is perhaps why so many of us are still uneasy and uncertain about Koestler. His themes are great themes, but he is not a great writer, if in some sense great writing becomes, whether as political or scientific writing, an end in itself. He always demands our agreement or disagreement, not our appreciation—although we should appreciate very greatly the skill and cultural role of such writing, admitting that it is not great literature. I think of Koestler as one might think of Orwell if he had never written *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The claim for literary greatness could not be made, but he would still have been a figure—like Koestler—of extraordinary interest and importance.

What, however, if the content, if the message, is the thing? What emerges in his later, more difficult writings is both compelling and tantalizing. What is compelling is his humanistic tone, even at times when journalistic cadences slip in. He sees the humor as well as the seriousness of life. Life is serious, not simply in how we react to each other, a purely humanistic position, but in how we must, he still believes, search for an overall synthesis or sense of purpose in humanity. He is an individualist who has come utterly to reject hedonism or utilitarianism in favor of a long-term responsibility for improving the human species.

In a paper of 1969, he identified "four outstanding, pathological symptoms reflected in the disastrous history of our species." They are (i) the "ubiquitous ritual" of human sacrifice; (ii) that "*homo sapiens* is virtually unique in the animal kingdom in his lack of instinctive safeguards of his own species"; (iii) "the chronic, quasi-schizophrenic split between reason and emotion, between man's rational faculty and his irrational, affect-bound beliefs"; and (iv) "the striking disparity between the growth curves of science and technology on the one hand and of ethical conduct on the other."

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And in *The Ghost in the Machine*, he set out a physiological hypothesis about the differential evolution of the brain in support of the third and fourth points.

It could of course be objected that the species has survived and flourished despite all this; that "disastrous history" is not a descriptive summary but an emotive prophecy; that "ethics" is not something for which a "growth curve" can be plotted, still less, extrapolated from; and that anthropological-physiological hypotheses are interesting as hypotheses, but virtually untenable, not established theories that could guide public policy and medical research. Koestler, I repeat, had real scientific training but, nonetheless, obvious tricks of the journalist creep in. He talks about "*conspecifics*," *an easy piece of impressive jargon, though he* immediately says in plain English, "members of his own species." This is a small and innocent example. I get more worried when he talks about "neuro-physiological *evidence*" for a "schizopsychology" in the human evolutionary process, without reminding his readers that such "evidence" is only inference from untested and contentious hypotheses.

Yet one admires his courage and explicit determination to show that a genuine intellectual must take his stand in two cultures. How much more interesting he still is than C.P. Snow ever was. Reading Koestler never makes one snooze, though my schizopsychology comes out in an occasional desire to throw the book out of the window, but then to run down and pick it up again, hoping that nothing *disastrous* has happened to it, only some rich, disfiguring marks of human tragedy from which to fashion a significant anecdote. In other words, I prefer Koestler the skeptic, telling his tale of Malraux's suddenly saying at a Writers' Congress in Moscow, after hearing countless speeches promising universal happiness in a brave new world: " 'And what about a child run over by a tram-car?' There was a pained silence; then somebody said, amid general approbation: 'in a perfect, planned socialist transport system, there will be no accidents.' " This is better, to my taste, than the man who likes to be the H.G. Wells of the intellectual upper middle classes rather than of the self-taught lower middle classes.

So an assessment of Koestler's peculiar genius is difficult. Have any of us ever read all his books? And there is the journalism as well as the books. His own sense of achievement is shown clearly in the selection of this book. He probably disappoints his old readers or the young who read his old novels by calling fully half of *Bricks to Babel* his "Search of Synthesis," and presenting there mainly the scientific

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writings. But in terms of the sheer bulk of this scientific writing, the first half of the book, "In Search of Utopia," is in fact disproportionate. He would like to be remembered as a scientific thinker; but he is too good a professional writer not to realize where his greater effect and following still lie. So he presents his literary past fully and does not appear to rewrite. No Audenesque problems here.

The extracts from the novels fit in easily with the nonfictional works. The value of *Darkness at Noon* and *Arrival and Departure* is in their authenticity. Camus's *The Rebel* is a better philosophical analysis of the totalitarian mind, but it is too abstract for most readers, just as Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* is too pedantic and monumental. Even Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, impossible though it is to put down, can be brushed aside as a nightmare or diminished as an overdrawn satire on postwar Britain. Koestler knows what he was talking about and is hard to diminish; he is easier to ignore or foolishly dismiss in New York as a nice "cold war warrior" or in London as "too clever by half." The issue in the 1940s, as the Party hacks and the fellow travelers put it, was only whether he was a liar or not. And plainly he wasn't.

This very factualness is both the clue to and the continuity in his achievement. It is not an esthetic achievement. We read his books for their matter and to learn something from them. This too links the old with the new Koestler. We should read the new scientific Koestler just as we read the earlier political novels: because he is talking about something we need to know, but all the time aware that it is a prince of journalists, a cosmic reporter, the doyen of conferenceurs, who is addressing us as an audience, mingling, like any good feature writer, personal angles with hard information. We open the quality press and we are informed, stimulated, but always on our guard. He writes columns as big and bustling as Babel, not monographs.

Whether or not Koestler himself believes that he has philosophical or scientific originality (as did Wells, alas) is irrelevant. I hope he doesn't, but it really doesn't matter. He is one of the greatest intellectual popularizers of our time, the interpreter for one set of intellectuals of the concepts of another. And his genuine cosmopolitan stance has been earned and not easily achieved. One Koestler speaks more for human unity, despite his rationalist assault on the cult of Zen and the pretensions of Ghandi, than a dozen committees of UNESCO. He deeply appreciates national cultural differences, but attaches little value to them and adopts each in turn with a kind of ironic affection.

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Ultimately, he should be pleased with himself as the super-reporter. What he has now given us is, in fact, in its temporal order and with its headnotes, a remarkably full and clear picture of the public activities of his life. The rest is silence.

To end, most tentatively, on a mischievous or an affectionate thought? His last novel was a rather lightweight, merry satire called *The Call Girls*: those great men, mainly, who wait for the letter or the phone to summon them to Alpbach, Pugwash, Villa Bellagio (the Rockefeller Foundation's earthly paradise), or wherever, the eternal conference round of internationally famous intellectuals. It was a very knowing satire. How often had he played that game himself, as perhaps a widely translated professional writer must. He may have grown weary of it, found it no longer so useful to him, or even risen above it; but in the end I suspect that the old journalist simply had to report on the institution: to send it up simply by describing it. It was like that. He was a great descriptive writer. But what they were probably all talking about were themes as vast, but at times possibly as vapid, as some of his "fate of the species" books.

Surely it will be, rightly or wrongly, his earlier political books for which he will be best and longest remembered. He told the tale so compellingly of how a man came to look for utopias, but finally grew skeptical of political activity, except for small clear things: like abolition of capital punishment. It might fairly be objected that between utopianism and skepticism lies the whole range of practical politics, from the conservative to the democratic socialist. Orwell thought that Koestler should have explored the nature of a non-utopian political theory. But Koestler was not a political thinker. And no man, not even Koestler, can do everything. Koestler had a tendency to dramatize things to extremes, the Yogi or the commissar, and to exclude obvious mundane middles. He was a reporter of great themes, however. If there were no immediate utopias to observe in the 1950s from that Graf Zeppelin still hovering over polar extremes, he would have to report on the evolution of the species itself. I cannot evaluate his success or not in this matter, only share a common skepticism, but with a shameful sense of not being brave or rash enough to try myself. But it does not diminish or change his earlier work, and one has to hope that he himself takes this view, either at peace with himself in his old age or properly proud of all the bricks he made so skillfully and in such difficulties as a great and dedicated professional writer and superjournalist.

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Shlomo Avineri

LETTER FROM ISRAEL

For many observers the Israeli elections of 1977, which brought Menachem Begin to power, seemed like an aberration. Labor's defeat, after thirty years of continuous control of Israel's political life, appeared to be no more than an unfortunate combination of a number of unrelated elements: Rabin's mediocre qualities of leadership, the discovery of corruption among some members of Labor's elite, the internal squabbles between Rabin and Peres, Rabin's own illegal dollar account, the emergence of Yigael Yadin's attractive reform-oriented Democratic Movement for Change—all these contributed to the loss of Labor's plurality. Without any great increase in its own vote, the Likud thus became Israel's largest party and Begin, so it seemed, inherited the Premiership not so much due to his party's own strength as to Labor's weakness. The fact that Begin himself was incapacitated during most of the election campaign because of a heart attack contributed to this general feeling that he might not be more than an accidental Prime Minister.

The election results of 1981 have dispelled these illusions almost completely. Just like the 1977 elections, the 1981 campaign had its own paradoxes: the Labor Alignment managed to bounce back, from thirty-two to forty-seven members of Knesseth, but this remarkable recovery was not strong enough to unseat Begin. Moreover, Begin participated vigorously throughout the whole campaign and his oratorical skills as a populist tribune became more than evident. The Likud proved itself to be immensely popular among many of the so-called 'Oriental' Jewish voters—the 'ethnic' vote made up of immigrants from Muslim countries and their descendants: Moroccan, Iraqui, Yemenite Jews tended to vote for Likud rather than Labor despite their generally lower socio-economic status. Younger people also tended to vote more for Likud than for Labor, and very strong anti-Labor groundswells were visible and audible during much of the campaign, which became vicious and occasionally even violent in its last stages.

Obviously, some fundamental changes are occurring in Israeli politics, and it is the aim of these comments to put them in some sort

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of historical perspective. For what occurred in 1977 and then again in 1981 should have come as no surprise. The tendencies that culminated in two Likud electoral victories were visible, albeit on a smaller scale, for several years. They were, however, dismissed as marginal phenomena, and since Labor continued to win all elections until 1977, they were conveniently pushed under the carpet.

Yet, as in so many other cases of political change and upheaval, the shift of the periphery to the center of the political scene was a drawn-out process whose first expressions were hardly noticeable and even less appreciated.

There seem to be two major structural developments which have contributed to this realignment of Israel's political forces. The first is a shift in the demographic balance between 'European' (Ashkenazi) Jews and 'Oriental' (Sephardi) Jews in the country's population. The second is the shift in the political agenda of Israeli society since the Six Days War of 1967. In both cases, the first signs became apparent some years ago: 1977 and 1981 only registered them dramatically on the political map.

First, the demographic shift.

When Israel was established in 1948, its Jewish population numbered about 700,000 people. Out of that number, about 85% were immigrants from European countries and their descendants, while about 15% were immigrants from Muslim countries and their descendants. Today, Israel's Jewish population is close to 3,500,000: about 50% of these are 'Europeans,' and the other 50% are 'Orientals.'*

Thus, the non-European population, which has been marginal in Israeli political life in the first years after its establishment, has now reached the 50% mark of Israel's Jewish population. Most of this increase is due to immigration: but because non-European families are generally larger than European ones, the percentage of non-Europeans continues to rise even more among the younger age cohorts in the country. Insofar as this influx of non-European Jews has caught the attention of the media and public opinion outside of Israel, this has generally focused on the socio-economic dimensions

*There is, of course, also the Arab population within Israel's pre-1967 borders, which participates in parliamentary elections and makes up between 12-14% of the electorate: but the shifts in its voting patterns would require a separate discussion, which is outside the scope of these comments.

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posed by this immigration with its lower socio-economic status. Yet, despite the fact that, generally speaking, most non-European immigrants are today better off economically and socially than they have been when immigrating, and many of the socio-economic gaps have been visibly closed, the impact of this new immigration on Israeli life is much wider than can be expressed merely by economic or educational statistics.

The liberal, social-democratic nature of much of Israeli society as it has evolved prior to the establishment of the state and in its first decades owes most of its impetus and character to the European immigrants who were the Founding Fathers (and Mothers) of Israeli society. Labor Zionism was a product of this Eastern and Central European immigration: most of these immigrants came from a more or less secularized background, were imbued with the ideas and heritage of the European enlightenment as reflected in the reawakened Jewish self-consciousness of the massive Jewish communities in and around the Pale of Settlement. Liberal, democratic, and socialist ideas were dominant, and since the 1920s the major political struggles in the Jewish community in Palestine and later in Israel were among the various brands of Labor Zionism. The kibbutzim and moshavim, the Histadruth and the Hagannah were the various expressions of this socialistically oriented tradition, which over the years became synonymous with the emerging 'Establishment' of Israeli society. A mixed economy with a strong public and cooperative sector, an egalitarian wage structure and a basically moderate policy vis-à-vis the Arab population became the hallmarks of this tradition. Out of this ambience, identified with the hegemony of the Labor movement, grew the willingness to accept partition in 1947 and to abide by a situation in which the realization of the Zionist dream would be achieved at the cost of not claiming Jewish control over all of the historical Land of Israel. A vision of social reconstruction coupled with pragmatism in foreign policy emerged as this unique blending of social vision and national moderation.

True, even during the halcyon years of Labor ascendancy there always existed the right-wing nationalism of the Revisionist Party under Jabotinsky, the Irgun, and after 1948, Begin's Herut party (later to become the main component of the Likud). Yet while the Hagannah was a people's militia numbering almost 100,000 members, the Irgun never had more than 5,000 activists; and after Independence, when Begin emerged as a head of a political party, he

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always remained at the margin of Israel's political life. His party numbered between eight to twenty members in the Knesseth, losing eight parliamentary elections in a row between 1949 and 1973.

The emergence of the non-European electorate as a major force in Israeli politics in recent years introduced into the center of the political scene of the country a population coming from a completely different social and intellectual cutlure. In brief, most non-European immigrants came to Israel from a background that was much more Third World than European.

It is this different cultural background that is sometimes overlooked in many accounts of the changing Israeli scene. The non-European immigrants, coming as they do from 'Third-World' Middle Eastern countries, came from highly traditional cultures. Unlike Jewish communities in Europe (and America), the Jewish communities in the Middle East have not gone through 100 or 150 years of secularization, emancipation, and enlightenment; their leadership is still primarily religious and traditional; socialist, revolutionizing Zionist Labor parties were not active among these communities as they have been among Eastern and Central European Jews; most of the 'Oriental' immigrants are religiously orthodox, and their family structures remain hierarchical and male-oriented. Egalitarian ideas advocating equality between the sexes as well as between the elders and the youngsters never struck root among them; nor did these 'Oriental' immigrants come from a political culture in which party politics ever played a significant role. Hence the egalitarian ideas immanent in the Labor ethos never really appealed to many of these immigrants; they react much more positively to the style of hierarchical leadership like that of Begin and are mostly lost in the labyrinthine ideological divisions among the squabbling wings and factions of the Labor Party.

Similarly, a simple, if not simplistic, attitude to the Arab-Israeli conflict as the one offered by Begin—'This country is either ours, or it is theirs'—strikes a much more responsive chord among the non-European, traditional, and ethno-centric voters than the tortuous compromises of Labor's attempts to square its Zionism with universalist and humanist ideas.

There is a further element, sometimes submerged even in the political consciousness of Israel itself, and this has to do with some general attitudes vis-à-vis the Arabs which can be found among many Jews coming from Arab countries. Some pious hopes have been expressed in the past that with the growing 'Sephardization' of

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Israeli society, new avenues will be open for Jewish-Arab understanding, since 'Oriental' Jews, coming themselves from an Arab environment, would be better suited than their Western brethren for an accommodation with the Arab World. PLO propaganda sometimes gave expression to a more malignant version of the same idea, namely, that all the trouble in the Middle East stems from the 'European' and 'Western' nature of 'Ashkenazi Zionism': with the ascent of the 'Arab Jews,' as the PLO calls them, peace and understanding will triumph.

Reality, however, proved to be much more complex and recalcitrant. Jews coming from Arab countries do come from an Arab environment: yet they bring with them not only knowledge of the Arab language and acquaintance with Arab music, but also memories, personal and collective, of centuries of persecution and discrimination at the hands of Arab and Muslim majorities. Though the Muslim world was generally free from anything like the rabid brands of European anti-Semitism, Jews in Muslim countries—like all other non-Muslim minorities—were subjected to discrimination, humiliation, and occasional persecution. The civic discrimination of non-Muslims is basic to Muslim societies and codified in Islamic law, and anti-Jewish pogroms became even more frequent with the rise of Arab radical nationalism which sometimes took on quite xenophobic features. Jews coming from Iraq or Yemen have carried with them the scars of these personal and historical memories just as European Jews carried with them the imprint of Ukrainian pogroms and Nazi persecution.

While for most European Jews in Israel the Arab-Israeli conflict remained primarily a political conflict, basically free from the bitterness of historical memories and resentments, for many 'Oriental' Jews the conflict is imbued with overtones of precisely such historical dimensions. And just as European Jews can be understood—if not necessarily forgiven—for not harboring particularly fond emotions about Cossacks, so many Jews immigrating from Arab countries continue likewise to carry with them an anti-Arab resentment which is then translated into more hawkish attitudes about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Bluntly put, for many Middle Eastern Jews the Arabs are the historical oppressors, the *goyim*. No wonder that while many European Jews do agonize about the degree to which the PLO may represent some elements of the Palestinian right to self-determination despite its terroristic activities, for most 'Oriental' Jews the PLO is nothing else than a continuation of a familiar Arab enmity towards the Jews. And when an Iraqi nuclear reactor is hit by Israel,

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few European Jews in Israel view it in a context of a complex and long reckoning between the Jews and Iraqi nationalism which has ousted 100,000 Jews from Iraq and sequestered their property: for many 'Oriental' Jews this is precisely the context in which such an Israeli act should be viewed. No wonder that the bombing of the Iraqi reactor was immensely popular among non-European voters much more than among European ones; nor should it come as a surprise that the 'Peace Now' movement has yet to show any significant support among the Sephardi population: it is almost exclusively made up of 'Europeans.'

Public opinion polls suggest that on all issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict, 'Oriental' Jews tend to hold much more hawkish attitudes than 'European' ones. With the spread of secondary and higher education among the 'Oriental' population, such hawkish views tend to diminish somehow, yet they remain still more hawkish than the views of 'Europeans' with comparable education. Even within the Labor Party, most 'Oriental' members of Knesseth belong to the more hawkish wing of the Party.

All these elements combined together to bring about the situation in which Labor tended to be much weaker in recent elections among 'Oriental' voters than among 'European' ones, and Likud tended to draw most of its support from the 'Oriental' vote. In the 1981 elections, 70% of the Labor vote came from the 'European' electorate, and only 30% from 'Oriental' voters. In the Likud, the obverse picture obtains: 68% of the Likud voters were 'Oriental' and only 32% were 'European.' These trends have been visible for more than a decade, but with the growth of the 'Oriental' vote, as well as with their growing emancipation from the Labor-dominated bureaucracy, which to a large extent influenced and directed their vote in their first years of immigration, when they were still newcomers and not always familiar with the mechanics of election, the decisive impact of this shift has only now come to be felt as perhaps the dominant feature of the Israeli political scene.

The paradox of this is, of course, that Menachem Begin, the idol of the 'Oriental' electorate, could not be less of an 'Oriental' himself. With his conservative suits, his proper ties and cuff-links, his frequent Latin quotations ('status quo ante,' 'pacta sunt servanda,' 'habemus pacem'), nobody could be further removed from the ambience of the 'Oriental' masses than this scion of the Russo-Polish Jewish Pale of Settlement. The nationalist, ethno-centric, tradition-oriented, and hierarchical style of leadership projected by Begin is nonetheless admirably suited to the emotional and cultural

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horizons of the 'Oriental' electorate whose power is growing and will continue to grow in Israeli politics. To those who always bemoaned Israel's 'Western' nature and hoped for its integration into the Middle East, Begin is the cruel answer: Israel now has a leader better suited to the nature of its growing Middle Eastern Jewish population, and is thus more 'integrated' into the Middle East than under Ben Gurion, Eshkol, and Golda Meir, with their Western, social democratic, and universalist ideas. It is, though, an integration into the real, not the imaginary Middle East, into a Middle East that prefers hierarchical styles of leadership, into a Middle East where populist nationalism is much more popular than universalist humanism. With a vengeance, Israel has been integrated into that Middle East, and Begin, incredible as it may seem, is the symbol of this Israeli relative integration into the Third World. What a cruel twist to the hidden hand of the Cunning of Reason.

The second fundamental change in Israeli politics in recent years has been the shift in the focus of the political agenda of the country.

Until 1967, there existed a widely held consensus on foreign policy issues in Israel. The partition of Palestine has been widely accepted as the best possible deal open to Zionism, and even Begin and his party have toned down over the years their claims for the whole of Eretz Israel. Before Nasser's catastrophic moves in May 1967, nobody in Israel seriously challenged the frontiers that were established in the wake of the 1949 armistice agreements between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Had the Arab states agreed before 1967 to transform these armistice lines into permanent and recognized borders, there would have been an overwhelming consensus in Israel for the acceptance of such a proposal.

The political debate in Israel between 1949 and 1967 was consequently focused on internal issues. Occasionally, as in 1956 during the Suez campaign, foreign affairs came up, but even then a widely held consensus ruled supreme. The main public concerns, as reflected in the press, in public debates, election campaigns, and the like, were problems of immigration, integration, nation-building, economic development, housing, education, retraining of newcomers, the development and opening up of new areas (like the Negev)—in short, the focus was on those issues of internal policies in which a social-democratic party with a strong commitment to nation-building enjoyed an obvious advantage. To an immigrant

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just freshly arrived either from the Displaced Persons camps in Europe or from a ghetto in Yemen, these were the issues which appeared pressing and relevant for him and his family. Labor had both the machinery of government at its disposal as well as the ideological and symbolical language to tackle these problems: the Ingathering of the Exiles, the Melting Pot, Making the Desert Blossom—these were the public slogans widely accepted in those years. For a newcomer still struggling to read the roadsigns leading from Tel-Aviv to Haifa, an impassioned plea by a person like Begin for the inalienable historical rights of the Jewish people to Jericho or Tul-Karm did not make much sense. And indeed, between 1949 and 1967 the Begin-style nationalist appeal appeared mostly irrelevant, and while Begin's party managed to hold on to the stalwart support of most erstwhile Irgun members, it never broke through on a massive scale.

1967 changed all this very drastically: with Israel in control of all historical Eretz Israel west of the Jordan River, the questions which appeared to have been settled once and for all in 1948 were reopened again. Domestic issues were put on the back burner, and ever since 1967 the constant debate in Israeli public life has centered around issues dealing with problems of nationalism. Since the aftermath of the Six Days War is still open-ended, and the issues—territorial and other—raised by the war have not been settled, they are constantly at the center of Israeli public debate: what are the justifications for Israeli claims to Judea and Samaria; what should be Israel's policies towards the Palestinians; what should the future boundaries of Israel be; should Jewish settlements be set up in the 'territories'; how should Israel react to PLO terrorism—through a willingness to negotiate with the Palestinians or through the iron fist, etc.

In all these questions, the simple 'Us vs. Them' approach expressed by the Likud has—on balance—a much greater chance of getting across than the complex approach of Labor, which tries to balance Zionism with universalist values and strike a middle road between socialist ideas and defense considerations. Young people who have grown into maturity after 1967 have been exposed to the constant barrage of public debate on these issues rather than on internal problems, and have been sensitized to the centrality of these problems to the concerns of the nation rather than to the centrality of questions of social justice. For young people, the psychological map of Israel is that of the post-1967 situation, in which you roam freely

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over the West Bank, Sinai, and the Golan: older people, whose psychological map of the country was moulded in the 1949-1967 period, are much more conscious of the pre-1967 borders and their political and demographical consequences. Nor are exhortations about the Jewish historical rights to Jericho and Tul-Karm merely abstruse claims any more, as they were before 1967: these places are real and visible, many young Israelis spent their army years in their vicinity, and the newcomers have been absorbed into society in a way which makes it possible for them to follow these debates with comprehension.

One of the results of this shift in the political agenda is that people who grew up in the post-1967 atmosphere tend to support Likud on balance more than older people. Israeli universities offer an unusual paradox: most of the faculty tend to be liberal and left wing, while the student activists, who managed to capture most of the student organizations at the universities, are right-wing supporters.

Those Labor supporters who tried to console themselves after the elections that Likud's victory was merely an outcome of Begin's personality, now have to contend with these long-range developments. They also have to face the fact that after Begin's disappearance, the Likud will possess a number of popular possible successors: Ariel Sharon, the Minister of Defense, is certainly not the darling of the Israeli left wing, but he is immensely popular in the country; David Levy, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, is a young Moroccan textile worker from a development town in the north, who represents the populist support for the Likud among 'Oriental' blue-collar workers; and Yoram Aridor, the Minister of Finance, who through the introduction of tax cuts and reduction of import duties helped to create a consumer boom in the country, albeit at the cost of long-range problems. This is a powerful trio, and Labor is still at a loss to supply new faces to counter them: the old, tired leadership of Labor is not exactly appealing to those who really want a change.

Does all this mean that Labor has no chance in the future? Certainly not. After all, the parliamentary strength of Labor is almost equal to that of the Likud, and Begin's coalition has a threadbare majority in the Knesseth. Yet even were Labor to win the next elections, it would not return to its former position as an unchallenged hegemonic party, with no viable opposition to replace it—as Labor

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has been for almost three decades under Ben Gurion, Eshkol, and Golda Meir. Now a very strong populist right wing will face such a Labor-dominated government, and Labor has not yet found an adequate answer on how to address itself to the new electorate and the new political agenda. Since their defeat in 1977, Labor's leaders have been too preoccupied with their return to power, and have consequently neglected the onerous task of rebuilding the party and revamping the whole Labor establishment. The Histadruth, the kibbutzim, the moshavim—all these flowers of Labor Zionism—have, over the years, become top heavy with conservative and unimaginative bureaucracies; Peres and Rabin have come to leadership positions through bureaucratic in-fightings, not through public confrontations with popular tribunes like Begin.

Obviously, the present leadership does not have the qualities, and the stomach, for such an excruciating fight; it reacts bureaucratically and diplomatically to each new surprise Begin is able to bring up—the bombing of the Iraqi reactor, the Golan Law—without imagination and vigor. By trying to sound *ministeriable*, it neglects to deal with the changing infrastructures of Israeli society.

It took the French left wing twenty-three years to come back to power in France after de Gaulle's coup in 1958. It will probably take less time for the Israeli left wing to do so: but it will not be a return to the idyllic unquestioned hegemony of the historical Labor establishment. Something fundamental has changed in Israeli society, and the Likud with its populist nationalism gives it—for better or for worse—an authentic expression. A different Israel has emerged from the Ingathering of the Exiles which took place in the context of a Thirty Years War. None of the dreamers of Zionism has ever thought that such would be the context of their dream's realization: but this is the real Israel, with half its Jewish population being more Third World than European, living in the real, and not always very pleasant Middle East. It has not become a Sparta or a Prussia, but obviously some of its Athenian or Weimarian qualities have been attenuated.

It is to this changing nature of Israeli society that a new Israeli left-wing movement will have to address itself. The historical Labor movement does not seem at the moment able to carry this burden, and a New Left has not yet appeared. Depressing as it may sound, Begin's Second Republic does not appear at the moment to be seriously challenged.

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COMMENT

Cynthia Ozick

WHAT LITERATURE MEANS

At a party once I heard a gifted and respected American writer—a writer whose prestigious name almost everyone would recognize—say, "For me, the Holocaust and a corncob are the same." The choice of "corncob"—outlandish, unexpected, askew—is a sign of the strong and daring charge of his imagination, and so is its juxtaposition with the darkest word of our century. What he intended by this extraordinary sentence was not to shock the moral sense, but to clarify the nature of art.

He meant that there is, for art, no such element as "subject matter"; for art, one sight or moment or event is as good as another—there is no "value" or "worth" or "meaning"—because all are equally made up of language, and language and its patterns are no different from tone for the composer or color for the painter. The artist as citizen, the writer explained, can be a highly moral man or woman—one who would, if the Nazis came, hide Jews. But the artist as artist is not a moral creature. Within literature, all art is dream, and whether or not the artist is or is not in citizenly possession of moral credentials is irrelevant to the form and the texture of the work of art, which claims only the territory of the imagination, and nothing else.

For that writer, a phrase such as "a morally responsible literature" would be an oxymoron, the earlier part of the phrase clashing to the death with the latter part. To be responsible as a writer is to be responsible solely to the seizures of language and dream.

I want to stand against this view. The writer who says, "For me, the Holocaust and a corncob are the same," is putting aside the moral sense in art, equating the moral impulse only with the sociologically real, or perhaps with the theologically ideal. In literature he judges the moral sense to be an absurd intrusion. He is

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in the stream that comes to us from Greece, through Walter Pater and Emerson: art for its own sake, separated from the moral life. He is mainly Greek.

For me, with certain rapturous exceptions, literature *is* the moral life. The exceptions occur in lyric poetry, which bursts shadowless like flowers at noon, with the eloquent bliss almost of nature itself, when nature is both benevolent and beautiful. For the rest—well, one discounts stories and novels that are really journalism; but of the stories and novels that mean to be literature, one expects a certain corona of moral purpose: not outright in the grain of the fiction itself, but in the form of a faintly incandescent envelope around it. The tales we care for lastingly are the ones that touch on the redemptive—not, it should be understood, on the guaranteed promise of redemption, and not on goodness, kindness, decency, all the usual virtues. Redemption has almost nothing to do with virtue, especially when the call to virtue is prescriptive or coercive; rather, it is the singular idea that is the opposite of the Greek belief in fate: the idea that insists on the freedom to change one's life.

Redemption means fluidity; the notion that people and things are subject to willed alteration; the sense of possibility; of turning away from, or turning toward; of deliverance; the sense that we act for ourselves rather than are acted upon; the sense that we are responsible, that there is no *deus ex machina* other than the character we have ourselves fashioned; above all, that we can surprise ourselves. Implicit in redemption is amazement, marveling, suspense, even the suspense of the didactic, wherein the next revelation is about to fall. Implicit in redemption is everything against the fated or the static: everything that hates death and harm and elevates the life-giving—if only through terror at its absence.

Now I know how hazardous these last phrases are, how they suggest philistinism, how they lend themselves to a vulgar call for an "affirmative" literature in order to fulfill a moral mandate. I too recoil from all that: the so-called "affirmative" is simpleminded, single-minded, crudely explicit; it belongs either to journalism or to piety or to "uplift." It is the enemy of literature and the friend of coercion. It is, above all, a hater of the freedom inherent in story-telling and in the poetry side of life. But I mean something else: I mean the corona, the luminous envelope—perhaps what Henry James meant when he said, "Art is nothing more than the shadow of

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humanity." I think, for instance, of the literature of midrash, of parable, where there is no visible principle or moral imperative. The principle does not enter into, or appear in, the tale; it *is* the tale; it realizes the tale. To put it another way: the tale is its own interpretation. It is a world that decodes itself.

And that is what the corona is: interpretation, implicitness, the nimbus of *meaning* that envelops story. Only someone who has wholly dismissed meaning can boast that the Holocaust and a corncob are, for art, the same. The writers who claim that fiction is self-referential, that what a story is about is the language it is made out of, have snuffed the corona. They willingly sit in the dark, like the strict-constructionist Karaites who, wanting to observe the Sabbath exactly, sat in the lampless black and the fireless cold on the very day that is most meant to resemble paradise. The misuse of the significance of language by writers who most intend to celebrate the comeliness of language is like the misuse of the Sabbath by the fundamentalist Karaites: both annihilate the thing they hope to glorify. *What literature means is meaning.*

But having said that, I come to something deeply perilous: and that is imagination. In Hebrew, just as there is *t'shuva*, the energy of creative renewal and turning, so there is the *yetzer ha-ra*, the Evil Impulse—so steeped in the dark brilliance of the visionary that it is said to be the source of the creative faculty. Imagination is more than make-believe, more than the power to invent. It is also the power to penetrate evil, to take on evil, to become evil, and in that guise it is the most frightening human faculty. Whoever writes a story that includes villainy enters into and becomes the villain. Imagination owns above all the facility of becoming: the writer can enter the leg of a mosquito, a sex not her own, a horizon he has never visited, a mind smaller or larger. But also the imagination seeks out the unsayable and the undoable, and says and does them. And still more dangerous: the imagination always has the lust to tear down meaning, to smash interpretation, to wear out the rational, to mock the surprise of redemption, to replace the fluid force of suspense with an image of stasis; to transfix and stun rather than to urge; to spill out, with so much quicksilver wonder, idol after idol. An idol serves no one; it is served. The imagination, like Moloch, can take you nowhere except back to its own maw. And the writers who insist that literature is "about" the language it is made of are offering an idol: literature for its own sake, for its own maw: not for the sake of humanity. *Literature is for the sake of humanity.*

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My conclusion is strange, and takes place on a darkling plain. Literature, to come into being at all, must call on the imagination; imagination is in fact the flesh and blood of literature; but at the same time imagination is the very force which struggles to snuff the redemptive corona. So a redemptive literature, a literature that interprets and decodes the world, beaten out for the sake of humanity, must wrestle with its own body, with its own flesh and blood, with its own life. Cell battles cell. The corona flickers, brightens, flares, clouds, grows faint. The *yetzer ha-ra*, the Evil Impulse, fills its cheeks with a black wind, hoping to blow out the redemptive corona; but at the last moment steeples of light spurt up from the corona, and the world with its meaning is laid open to our astonished sight.

In that steady interpretive light we can make distinctions; we can see that one thing is not interchangeable with another thing; that not everything is the same; that the Holocaust is different, God knows, from a corncob. So we arrive, at last, at the moral purpose of literature: to reject the blur of the "universal"; to distinguish one life from another; to illumine diversity; to light up the least grain of being, to show how it is concretely individual, particularized from any other; to tell, in all the marvel of its singularity, the separate holiness of the least grain. *Literature is the recognition of the particular.*

For that, one needs the corona.

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Kathleen Agena

U.S. POLICY AND THE THIRD WORLD

The current administration has made its foreign policy position with respect to development issues in the Third World very clear: the road to increased development, it argues, cannot be paved by massive economic transfers, but must be forged by individual initiative and private investment. On the surface, this policy is hardly more than the traditional conservative remedy for all economic ills, whether domestic or foreign, and it employs code words that assume the existence of both democratic and capitalistic economic and political systems. As such, the policy is open to the usual liberal counterargument—namely, that to emphasize individual initiative in the post-colonial and generally feudalistically structured societies of the Third World is unrealistic, and rivals, in its impropriety, the policy Procrustes applied to fit travelers into his legendary bed.

Yet however well they may be argued as theories, both of these views, in their extreme form, break down as policies, and both are based on certain unexamined and erroneous assumptions about the Third World. Generally speaking, both hard-line liberals and conservatives seem to project upon the poorer developing countries a myth of the past. On the liberal side, this projection takes the form of idealizing the past, perceiving in the Third World a sort of innocence and inherent purity that is Rousseauistic in its contours. Conservatives, on the other hand, seem to blur the distinctions between the long historical and cultural development that spawned democratic institutions and the history and cultures of the developing world. The conservative view also tends to project a revisionist version of our own history onto these countries, glamorizing the cult of the individual and ignoring, for example, the fact that in its early stages this country was settled by immigrants, most of whom had been educated or had acquired skills in Europe before they arrived here.

The recent foreign policy debate over the exporting into Third World markets of products banned in the United States reveals how

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both of these distorted perceptions of the developing countries get construed into ineffective and potentially damaging foreign policy. Though the debate on exporting practices originally received congressional attention in 1978 with hearings called to investigate the exporting of Tris-treated children's clothes,* it did not receive wide national press coverage until November 1979, when a San Francisco-based muckraking magazine, *Mother Jones*, ran a lengthy report on the topic, calling it—with typical hyperbole—"The Corporate Crime of the Century." The slant of the article was that greedy multinational firms were making enormous profits by selling products considered inferior or unsafe in the United States to unwitting victims in the Third World. The editors of *Mother Jones* distributed the article to members of Congress and to the delegates of the U.N. General Assembly. Within months, the General Assembly had passed a resolution condemning the "dumping" of banned products, a bill had been proposed in the House of Representatives to control the export of such products by a lengthy licensing procedure, and, finally, former President Carter signed an Executive Order** (later rescinded by President Reagan) to restrict the exporting of such products, also via a lengthy interagency review and licensing procedure.

In the debate over this subject, much was made of the fact that the United States and other industrialized nations were using a "double-standard" approach toward the Third World—in other words, products considered unsafe for use here were judged adequate for markets in developing countries. In reality, the issues related to international trade in hazardous products are extremely complex and in no way lend themselves to such a caricature. Numerous conflicts in standards and in definitions of what is and is not a hazardous product exist among the United States, Europe, Canada, England, and Japan, as well as among various international agencies such as the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization, the United Nations Environment

* The hearings resulted in the passage of an amendment to the Toxic Substances Control Act; the 1978 amendment calls for notification to foreign governments whenever a substance is banned or restricted in the United States.

** Former President Carter had created an Ad Hoc Working Group on Hazardous Products in 1978, after the Tris-related hearings, and the Executive Order he signed was the result of recommendations proposed by this group; Reagan rescinded the order until a review could be made of existing regulations covering hazardous exports.

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Programme, and the International Labour Organization. For example, food colorings considered safe here are banned in some European countries, and several additives considered safe in Europe are banned in the United States;* the discrepancies in regulations are manifold and exist with respect to a wide range of pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and medical supplies. Generally, the standards recommended by the international agencies reflect a regulatory level that is less stringent than that in effect in the United States**—and that is too high in the sense of being unenforceable—for the Third World countries.

Strangely, the *Mother Jones* article did not investigate, or even refer to, these conflicts in standards, nor did it investigate regulatory policies within the Third World countries. If they had, they would have found that many of the countries that rhetorically condemned the "dumping" of banned American products were actually aware of and had approved the sale of these products within their borders; even more ironically, several Third World countries were and are themselves manufacturing and exporting products—in particular, pesticides—that they were publicly condemning American firms for exporting.

In other words, there was a sharp contradiction between actual policy positions that existed, and still exist, in Third World countries with respect to this issue, and the manner in which these policies were perceived and reported here. The *Mother Jones* article—on which the *Circle of Poison*, the PBS-aired film "For Export Only," a *Newsweek* article, and a "Lou Grant" television program apparently were later based—did not adequately investigate, or investigate at all, the realities of existing regulatory policies in Third World countries. Rather, it exploited the sensational elements of the issue and took the provincial and patronizing stance that American standards constituted an absolute of sorts, and that the Third World countries were incapable of determining standards for themselves. By taking this position, potential international pressure and public attention were drawn away from the serious problems that currently exist because of the relative laxity of regulatory measures within the

* Sometimes the regulations are an exact reversal of each other; for example, we ban red food coloring #2 and recommend red #40 as the substitute, while Canada and England, among others, accept red #2 but ban red #40.

** For example, WHO recommends DDT and dieldrin, both of which were restricted for use in the United States in the early 1970s.

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developing countries, and officials from these countries were provided with a *fait accompli* for evading their responsibilities for correcting these problems.

At the same time, the conservative position on this issue appears to favor a laissez-faire approach and ignores the usual interdependence of the problems posed by conflicts in regulating international trade in hazardous products: in addition to the boomerang effect, whereby products contaminated with pesticides we have banned return to us in imported food, there is also the risk that the misuse of certain hazardous products poses to the global food supply because of their deleterious effect upon soil productivity. While enacting tighter export controls, as the liberals propose, will not remedy either of these problems, nor appreciably reduce the dangers posed by hazardous products to the populations in the developing countries, the conservative angle—that business knows best what is good for the country—is equally ineffective and ignores the very serious problems that exist in this area.

A more pragmatic and effective approach would be to recognize, as the liberals did not, that the developing countries' priorities differ from ours—that is, that environmental regulation is generally considered an expendable luxury at their stage of development—and to acknowledge, as the conservatives so far have not, the degree to which our own economic self-interest and well-being depends upon better regulation in these countries. With this in mind, we could then devise trade agreements or other measures to encourage the upgrading of regulation in the developing countries. For example, in the case of the use of banned pesticides, we could tighten our enforcement on food imports, thus providing an indirect disincentive for the use of banned pesticides in the Third World; or we could provide certain trade incentives, either in the form of lowered tariff barriers or as subsidies to encourage the use of higher priced, less potentially dangerous chemicals. At the same time, the international agencies and the large environmental-action lobbying groups could direct public attention toward the problems that prevail in the Third World because of lax regulations and could provide more in the line of direct technical assistance, rather than guidelines and recommendations, which are useless without regulatory machinery to back them up.

The point here is that—as with other foreign policy issues with respect to the Third World—the genuine issues, as well as the solutions to this problem, were obscured. Often, it seems, we fail to perceive where real problems lie in the developing countries, or we

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misinterpret their causes or their potential effect. It is almost as if an immense distorting mirror, like those rippled devices found in carnivals, has been conjured up between us and the Third World. We believe that we look through it to reality; in fact, we see a delayed, illusionary reflection, a chimera of an imaginary past.

At the same time, it must be said that the mirror works both ways, obscuring the Third World countries' view of us as much as it affects our perception of them. From the other side of the looking glass, then, one needs to ask why it is that the Third World tends to impute to us more power than we actually have. Why is everything from traffic jams to changes in the weather attributed to the manipulations of one or another U.S. agency? Why are the developing countries not voicing their complaints against their oil-rich Third World partners who are putting a tighter stranglehold on development than any U.S. policy ever could? Finally, why are they so silent about Soviet aggression?

Peter Berger, in his analysis of the Third World ("Speaking to the Third World," *Commentary*, October 1981), argues that the Third World's antipathy toward the United States has its source in a mistaken notion of economic reality; the view of the developing countries, he says, is largely "an elaboration of Proudhon's dictum that property is theft. . . . The gain of one is necessarily the loss of another." As Berger dissects this theory, he advocates holding to the "reality principle" of development; that is, that the United States should not capitulate to demands for large-scale economic transfers, but rather assist the private sector and private entrepreneurship wherever possible against "*the* grand fantasy of our age—the socialist vision."

Berger is right in pointing to the fallacies in the Third World's grievances toward us. But, unfortunately, this will do little to solve our difficulties with the Third World and most likely will only exacerbate them. Berger does not take sufficiently into account the irrationality that imbues so much of American relations with the Third World. It is the irrationality itself that must be addressed, and it arises, I think, from the fact that we are sending the Third World "double signals" while the Soviets and the oil-rich Arabs are not. The contradictions between our humanitarian principles and our actual policies and, more important, between these policies and the messages conveyed via our mass-media-generated culture—which has had a far greater effect upon the populations of the developing countries than our official policy statements—produces the same sort

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of response on the collective level as it does on the personal. As the contradictions are prolonged, frustration inevitably leads to hostility. Because policymakers here do not take sufficient account of, or do not account at all for, this double image, they are baffled and annoyed at what often appears as the sheer nonsense that arises so often in U.S.-Third World relations.

The popularity and dissemination of our movies, television shows, and rock music—which blares as loudly across the savannas in Africa as it does on the streets of New York City—presents audiences in the Third World with a one-dimensional illusion that they take for the real thing; they see the abundance, the excesses, of our culture without seeing its human cost. In Nairobi in 1979, where I was stationed with one of the U.N. agencies, *Superman* was playing at the local movie theater, the Academy Awards presentations were being broadcast over Kenyan television, and the taxi driver who drove me to my hotel was singing along with Elton John and Linda Ronstadt on his car radio, though he had difficulty conducting a conversation with me in English. Out in the bush, one finds a communal television flickering images of "Carol Burnett," "I Love Lucy," and "Kojak" into villages that, in all other respects, are the same as they were one hundred or more years ago. Hearing American-made rock music or seeing reruns of television shows in this context, one is immediately struck by the sheer energy of it all—the amplified, frenetic electronics, the endless car chases and escapades (so different, even, from the slower pace of European movies). No wonder we are perceived as having a power far beyond what we actually possess. One also sees in this context how trivial and self-indulgent and how filled with innumerable gadgets the world of our TV sit-coms and movies appears. The audiences in the Third World see these entertainment fantasies and, because this is all they see, they assume them to be real. They do not see us bone tired from our work, nor do they know the wrenching personal sacrifices, the disruptive social fragmentation, that has occurred to fuel our society's competitive drives. They see our perpetually smiling, back-slapping politicians and businessmen, and they mistake what is actually a self-conscious, studied style of casualness for the arrogance of ease itself. How much more in common they must feel with the stiff, grim patriarchs of the Soviets, who speak of struggle and sacrifice and the glorification of the common laborer, or with their recently oil-rich Third World partners, who cling to traditional religious and social patterns even as they accumulate Mercedes and Lear jets.

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So, returning to Berger's point, the problem is not so much, I think, that the Third World sees wealth as theft, but rather that it sees our excesses and cannot understand why some of our apparent abundance cannot simply be transferred to them—which is, after all, precisely what they are requesting. In other words, just as we project onto these countries an illegitimate past that revises or evades our own stages of development, they project onto us an illusionary future that skips the progressions of necessary "developmental stages." Until we confront and assume some responsibility for the unrealistic expectations we have raised, however unintentionally, in the Third World, the situation is not likely to improve. I should say that I am not particularly optimistic about the outcome. We Americans, in particular those who make their careers in the public sector, are too action-oriented to undertake the deflating ordeal of self-examination, especially when something so apparently superficial as public image is the object of the analysis. At the same time, the hard-line approach taken by the current administration is certain to increase the hostility the developing countries feel toward us, and will probably make their utopian dreams of the future even more compelling. Many of the Third World countries will probably slide from their present oligarchic and feudalistic structures into Soviet-brand socialism, and for the farm laborers and factory workers in the Third World, little will have changed: instead of large, land-holding families or the heads of tribes, the elites will be the Party bureaucrats. America will become the official, rather than the convenient, enemy . . . and "Kojak" will be banned.

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BOOKS

LACK OF ENERGY

HANS BETHE: PROPHET OF ENERGY. By Jeremy Bernstein. Basic Books. $11.95.

"The real point of this book," says Jeremy Bernstein in his preface, "is the examination of what may well be the most significant question today concerning both science and public policy: namely that of energy." What Bernstein has actually done, however, is to present and explain the views of a single expert witness, Hans Bethe. He has also given us an engaging account of Bethe's early years and a concise history of the A-bomb and H-bomb projects, in both of which Bethe played a central role.

As an expert witness on nuclear power, Bethe is superbly qualified. For over half a century his contributions to theoretical physics and astrophysics have been marked not only by originality of the highest order but also by an equally rare and precious flair for creative synthesis. These qualities are as apparent in Bethe's ongoing research in the physics of superdense matter and the structure and evolution of superdense stars and supernovae—work that Bernstein omits to mention—as they are in his earlier work. And although Bethe has studied the peaceful uses of atomic energy long and deeply, he has, as he says, no axe to grind. He is neither an advocate nor an ideologue. His treatment of the substantive issues is insightful, thorough, and absolutely honest.

Bethe's analysis has led him to conclude that

> for the next twenty years, at least, . . . the mainstays [of the U.S. energy policy] will have to be coal and nuclear power. . . . We will need more of both of them. . . . Nuclear power is essential for our energy needs. But it is not enough to solve our energy problems. We need a determined conservation effort, especially in transportation and in the insulation of houses. We must start to conserve now. We need a vigorous program to make synthetic fuels. . . . Research and development of solar energy should be encouraged, although I do not believe it will make a substantial impact in the next twenty years or so.

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The argument leading to these conclusions is simple in outline. Domestic and foreign reserves of oil and natural gas are running out. Demand, however, is rising and will continue to rise at least until the turn of the century. Conservation and solar power can reduce but not fill the resulting gap. Hence we shall have to rely heavily on coal and nuclear power.

Those who dissent from this conclusion attack the argument at two points. First, the conventional estimates of our energy needs which Bethe accepts, the critics say are much too high. Secondly, the critics claim that small-scale solar power projects, supplemented by a modest increase in the use of coal under strict environmental safeguards, can make up for the declining production of oil and natural gas, and that they can do so more economically than nuclear power plants.

Whose arithmetic is right? Even asking this question may seem naive. Surely the disagreement over arithemtic springs from more basic disagreements about needs and lifestyles and about the practicality of significant social and political changes? There is some truth in this assertion. Believers in Jeffersonian democracy usually find small-scale solar power more attractive than strip mining and nuclear fission. But the choice is not between hard scientific realism and soft Jeffersonian idealism. There is more than one scientific perspective.

When a biological population enters a new, unoccupied ecological niche, it increases rapidly in size. It may also acquire, through the process of natural selection, new biological traits specifically adapted to the opportunities and challenges of the new environment. Cultural evolution resembles biological evolution in these respects, though of course it is much faster. The ways we "make" and use energy, along with many other aspects of our economic, social, and political life, are very recent evolutionary adaptations to a cheap, abundant supply of oil and natural gas. That aspect of our environment is now changing. Technologies and socioeconomic patterns that were once adaptive are rapidly becoming maladaptive. If our culture is to survive, it must acquire a new set of adaptations.

In the long run we must derive most of our power either from uranium burned in breeder reactors or from sunlight. Although some knowledgeable people have been skeptical about the *short-term* prospects for using sunlight to make up the energy deficit, there seems to be a consensus among those who have studied the question that sunlight and its derivatives could supply our energy needs

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before the middle of the next century—provided we set about developing the necessary technologies now. Sunlight is supplied by the burning of hydrogen into helium in the sun's core. The sun's supply of hydrogen should last for another five or six billion years.

The supply of uranium for breeder reactors would last only a few thousand years. That would almost surely be long enough, however, because it is hard to imagine how the planet could remain habitable for many millenia if breeder reactors, which manufacture the stuff atom bombs are made of, were to become our staple source of power. Thus nuclear power is a long-term option only in a rather modest sense of "long term."

Solar power has other advantages over nuclear power as a long-term option. Its technology is and would continue to be accessible to the developing nations. Solar power sources are safe and produce no poisonous byproducts. They would be widely dispersed rather than concentrated in a few widely separated (and militarily indefensible) sites. They would be managed and regulated mainly at individual and community levels rather than at the federal level.

What about the short term? Since the oil crisis of 1973, several groups of experts have made detailed estimates of the energy savings that could be achieved with existing technologies. Their conclusions are impressive. One such study is *A Low Energy Strategy for the United Kingdom* by Gerald Leach, Christopher Lewis, Ariane Van Buren, Frederic Romig, and Gerald Foley (London: Science Reviews, 1979).

> [The study] takes as its starting point the investigation of energy use, and the multiplicity of changes and adaptations that might reduce the amount of delivered energy required to provide a service. Energy demand is broken down into some 400 separate categories determined by end-use, fuels, and appliances. Projections of demand are then laboriously built up, "brick by brick." The conclusion? That gross national product could triple in the United Kingdom in the fifty years 1975-2025, but that a series of simple, known technical fixes could keep energy demand pretty much where it was in 1975.*

Projections of this kind must substantially underestimate the increased efficiency that could result from fifty years of technological

*Robert Stobaugh and Daniel Yergin, eds., *Energy Future* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 223.

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and social evolution. Energy-efficient technology is still in its infancy, and the evolution of adaptive residential patterns and transportation systems—delosangelization—has barely begun.

Increasing the efficiency of energy use is now and, according to recent studies, will for some years continue to be our most important new energy "source." For at least the next several decades, a dollar invested in nuclear power will yield far less energy than a dollar invested in improved efficiency.

At the same time, techniques for collecting and using sunlight are becoming steadily more productive. Advocates of nuclear power argue that increased energy efficiency and solar power cannot compensate for the shrinking supply of oil and natural gas, and that, at least in the short run, we will need to rely on nuclear power. But this may be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The two evolutionary strategies—conservation/solar and nuclear—may not be mutually exclusive, but they are certainly not mutually reinforcing. It is at least arguable that no nation has enough capital and human resources to pursue both effectively. If we make a long-term commitment to sunlight rather than to breeder reactors, shouldn't we invest all the capital, skill, and imagination we can muster in enterprises that directly support that commitment? Is nuclear power part of a balanced program? Or is it an uneconomic and dangerous diversion from a sound long-term program?

Nuclear power, strip mining on a vast scale, and the development of synthetic fuels epitomize the kinds of projects we have come to feel most comfortable with. They are energy-intensive, capital-intensive, highly centralized, and enormously profitable to small groups of wealthy investors (after the costs of research and development have been paid by taxpayers). They are also dirty, dangerous, and grossly uneconomic. The alternative strategy would, it is true, require positive initiatives by federal, state, and local governments—but initiatives of a kind traditionally favored (at least in principle) by economic conservatives: deregulation, lifting of building and industrial codes that stifle innovation, loans to individuals and small businesses for small, economically sound enterprises.

Nuclear power is not the wrong answer. But it may be the right answer to the wrong question: What must we do to feed our present energy habits? Perhaps we should be asking, how can we best acquire the habits and the technology we need to live well on our solar income?

DAVID LAYZER

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ALICE JAMES

ALICE JAMES: A BIOGRAPHY. By Jean Strouse. Houghton Mifflin Company. $15.00.

Virginia Woolf asked us to imagine the fate of Shakespeare's sister—but there was no need. Her father's friend, Henry James, had actually had a sister whose pathetic history could have served the author of *A Room of One's Own* to illustrate the outcome of female talent. But it was a less melodramatic case than Woolf's hypothetical one. Alice James never ventured into the world that might have scorned or destroyed her; she simply directed all her energies of mind and spirit, these having no other outlet, back upon her own personality. She had become a neurotic invalid. And when death finally arrived without her having reached for it, she made it, by her studied welcome, as much her act of choice as if she had committed suicide, like the suppositious Stratford girl.

When she was dying, Alice said to her other distinguished brother, William, "Pray don't think of me simply as a creature who might have been something else, had neurotic science been born." Psychiatric medicine might have been able, in fact, to assist her. But she was probably correct in believing that it would have left her essentially the same—a being who had been born with abilities like those of her brilliant siblings, but who had been unable to develop or employ them as they did, and who had chosen another form of expression, her illness. Perhaps her "failure" was not inevitable. Even in her time, women of her class and intelligence could sometimes evolve into something more positive than neurotic protest. She had enough literary gift to have become a successful writer; her sense of social issues should have made her a worker in one of the bustling reform movements of the time, particularly the movement for enlarged opportunities and rights for women. She herself probably did not identify her personal fate with the fact that she was a woman. After all, if William and Henry were daunting examples of masculine achievement, she had also her younger brothers, Robertson and Wilkinson, to remind her that men could flounder and destroy themselves. But hers was, nevertheless, a peculiarly female failure. She was cleverer and possessed a stronger will than these other James men, and it is hard to imagine that a masculine "creature" with such force would not have exerted it upon the outer world.

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Mind and will, in her case, were present in such abundance as, perhaps, to disable her for lesser adjustments. She was not very attractive to men, and not strongly attracted to them. The role of the self-abnegating and unreflecting madonna of the household, represented by her mother, did not appeal to her; she admired and would have emulated, instead, her restless, eccentric, philosopher-father, the friend of Emerson. But spinsterhood was not a real alternative. Unmarried, she ran the risk of becoming an adjunct wife and mother in one of her married brothers' households, like her Aunt Kate, her mother's sister, a fixture in her own home. There was really little else for a "polite" but meagerly educated woman to do. Unless, of course, she made her escape as one who herself required the caretaking of others. Yet, this done, she was too strong-minded not to have remained alert to the ironies of her condition. In such expressions of her personality as survive—letters and the journal she kept in her last years—she shows that it was her desire to refute the presumptions of health in an unbalanced society. She scorned what it might have allowed her to have been. "How dreary to be—Somebody!" she might have laughed, like Emily Dickinson who, by unaccountable luck, discovered how to convert such scorn to poetry.

Alice's solution to life was curiously connected with the influence of her father. It was he who sentenced her, after all, to defeat. His ideas of education, though liberal and even experimental in the cases of his sons, were perfectly conventional in the case of his daughter. He desired that his boys should imbibe a "sensuous" and varied experience by exposure to many ideas and places, by travel and a sequence of different schools. While the boys were at one school or another, however, Alice was generally left at home to absorb some scraps of education from intermittent governesses. Her father hardly thought she suffered by this discrimination. He expressed himself in *Putnam's Monthly*, in an article entitled "Women and the Women's Movement": "The very virtue of woman, her practical sense, which leaves her indifferent to past and future alike, and keeps her the busy blessing of the present hour, disqualifies her for all didactic dignity. Learning and wisdom do not become her." According to an "absolute decree of nature," James wrote, "woman is . . . inferior to man. . . . She is his inferior in passion, his inferior in intellect, and his inferior in physical strength. . . . Her aim in life is . . . simply to love and bless man." Alice herself half believed him, and remained ambiguous concerning the value of the education she had missed. Yet it is possible to detect irony in her remark later in

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life, that education "would have deprived [her] surely of those exquisite moments of mental flatulence which every now and then inflate the cerebral vacuum with a delicious sense of latent possibilities—of stretching oneself to cosmic limits, and who would ever give up the reality of dreams for relative knowledge?"

An Emersonian transcendental note which her father would have approved is qualified here by the world "flatulence," which testifies to her understanding of the body's demeaning reminders to the spirit—of which illness was a lifelong demonstration. Unlike her father, Alice maintained, by illness itself, contact with "relative knowledge" of the facts of life. And though she was a shut-in, she paid attention to the street outside, read newspapers, took an interest in politics. When she lived near her brother Henry in England, her radical viewpoints stimulated his own attention to social undercurrents and probably influenced the writing of his most political novel, *The Princess Casamassima*, in which she may be portrayed as Rosy Muniment. She was an ardent partisan of Irish home rule. William James once remarked that Henry was a member of the James family and of no other country, but for Alice connections threaded even from her sickroom into society at large. Henry felt that she, at least, had a nation outside the family—she alone of the Jameses recovered their ancestral Irishness.

Yet it was her father, as well as the younger Henry, who probably gave her a formula for "converting"—a favorite word of the elder Henry James—her defeat into triumph. Her father was himself a complex man. He had been a lively boy who had been crippled by a childhood accident, a member of a generation of Americans who had inherited income from their fortune-building forbears and had no need to exert themselves to make money. Looking about him in a period when the nation was giving itself more and more completely to vulgar material "progress," he felt justified in urging upon his children the superior cultivation of pure being. To be fine, to *be* with a pure, gemlike flame, was after all better than to *do*. Life did not demand that he should change his personal formula, but the Civil War arrived in time to pose the question of doing versus being to his five children. When young men of all classes felt the compulsion to engage themselves, only his two younger sons volunteered to serve in the Union Army. They were injured in the field and suffered in health, consequently, for the rest of their lives. His elder sons did not enlist, perhaps because of physical disability, perhaps because they had absorbed from their father a negative valuation of action. Yet

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William eventually found a mode of doing, indeed a philosophic justification of it, as the founder of pragmatism. And Henry, of course, wrote novels, but novels which celebrated the superiority of perception to what happens externally.

Alice, in those stirring times, found herself to be only a girl, too rich to take a man's place at the plow or in the factory, too young and "nervous" to volunteer for nursing. She would recall forever how, in the winter of 1862-63 when she was fourteen, she used to wander over the cliffs at Newport, her "young soul struggling out of its swaddling clothes as the knowledge crystallized within [her] of what Life meant for [her]." She analyzed what had happened: "Owing to muscular circumstances my youth was not of the most ardent, but I had to peg away pretty hard between 12 and 24, 'killing myself,' as someone calls it—absorbing into the bone that the better part is to clothe oneself in neutral tints, walk by still waters, and possess one's soul in silence." This subjugation of active impulses she rightly called "killing herself," yet it led to a means of survival on the level of simply being.

In 1866 she was under treatment in the New York clinic of Dr. Charles Taylor, a member of the new school of therapy which was rising to meet the needs of women like her. Dr. George M. Beard had coined the word "neurasthenia" to cover a wide range of symptoms—morbid fears, loss of appetite, neuralgia, weakness, headaches. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell called "hysteria" the trance states, hallucinations, outbursts of weeping or violence which some of his patients exhibited. Dr. Taylor shared the views of his colleagues as to the cause of these conditions. Girls, he had written, who were exposed to excessive emotional and intellectual stimulation, might find their systems "perverted from tissue-making, and absorbed, as it were, in the sensational life. The body is literally *starved*, while the nervous system is stimulated to the highest degree." He agreed with Alice's father concerning the deleterious effects of education on women. "While education in men makes them self-controlling, deliberate, calculating, thinking out every problem...the intellectual being the preponderating force, the so-called 'higher education' for women seems to produce the contrary effect on them."

In 1868, when she was nineteen, she had her first acute breakdown. She recalled twenty years later: "As I used to sit immovable reading in the library with waves of violent inclination suddenly invading my muscles taking some one of their myriad forms such as throwing myself out of the window, or knocking off the head of the

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benignant pater as he sat with his silver locks, writing at his table, it used to seem to me that the only difference between me and the insane was that I had not only all the horrors and suffering of insanity but the duties of doctor, nurse, and strait-jacket imposed upon me, too." The conflicts expressed here of self-destruction and murder in the appropriate setting of the family library became so powerful that there was no escape from them but a collapse into physical helplessness. In the end, however, physical helplessness, immobilization, were to sustain her life.

After her recovery, it was clear that no strenuous competition with family males—or males in general—was allowable. While William and Henry were building their professional and psychic identities out of achievements in science and art, she was directed to fill her days with the prescribed diversions of charity work, visiting, limited and unsystematic reading. Her mother wrote to Henry, unconscious of the paradox in her language, "Alice is trying to idle, and it is always very hard work, this to her, but I think it will tell in the end." In 1872 she got a chance to go to Europe with Henry and Aunt Kate, and it was, for a brief time, a taste of the exhilaration of action, for she grew suddenly strong and well, and Henry wrote that she was like "a person coming at last into the faculty and pleasure of movement and it is the most *active* part of life now which does her most good." The six months of looking, learning, and exploring later seemed the high point of her life.

By this time, her contemporaries were marrying. Alice watched, half-envious, half-scornful, pitying a friend yoking herself to a fool, contemptuous of some coarse female who had snared a fine man. Her own closest relationships were with other women. Her letters to friends have the characteristic tone of much nineteenth-century female correspondence—gushing, even flirtatious, they mimic the language of courtship and possibly express real sexual emotion. One female friendship, in any case, became a permanent relationship which substituted in some way for marriage. It was one of those fairly common and open attachments between two women which had come to be called, in fact, "Boston marriages." Was it Lesbian? Alice's sister-in-law, William's wife, thought so. Henry was fascinated and also repelled, and perhaps gave a version of what he saw in his novel, *The Bostonians*, whose very title may imply a reference to the phrase. But the James family recognized that in Katherine Loring—loving, competent, supportive as no one else had been willing to be—Alice had found at last the perfect companion.

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Katherine virtually took over her care after 1879, and the Jameses knew enough to be grateful.

Just a year earlier William James married, precipitating a severe breakdown in Alice. With this brother, there had always been an ambiguous, playfully flirtatious relationship, and all his early letters to her jokingly pretend that she is his sweetheart who outdistances all female rivals for his affection. How much of this persiflage masked a sibling eroticism one cannot know; as in the case of female friends, brother-sister relations in the Victorian era were half-pretendedly and half-truly substitutes for thwarted normal passion. When William married—his wife's name was also Alice!—his sister plunged into depression and spoke of suicide. Her mother's death in 1881, on the other hand, caused no crisis at all. Alice rather flourished, taking over the care of her father and the management of the household with the removal of the burdensome maternal model. With Katherine as a constant visitor, father and daughter settled into a domestic union in a new summer house she had built on the North Shore. His death the following winter did produce collapse, and now Henry, her remaining bachelor brother, began to play, jointly with Katherine, the parental or spousal role. In 1884 the two women came to England to be closer to him.

Though her psychic invalidism, now augmented by rheumatic gout, continued to keep her as much in bed as out of it, Alice would achieve a way of life in England. Visitors to her bedroom constituted a modest salon, and her wit exercised itself on old and new acquaintances. She loved to mock the very tradition of puritanism that had helped to make her what she was. She could laugh at Henry's friend, Grace Norton of Cambridge, who had given someone a copy of Montaigne with the "naughty" pages glued together. She herself was reading George Sand's letters and admiring the Frenchwoman for never having felt shame or guilt, unlike another New England friend "whose excellent mind [had] been stunted from the cradle by the burden of uncommitted sin."

To this same friend she wrote, "Pray, dearest Fanny, don't think of me as a forlorn failure but as a happy individual who has infinitely more in her life than she deserves. You know that ill or well one is never deprived of the power of standing for what one was meant to stand for." What she stood for had been asserted dispersedly in many of her letters and in her personal conversation, but in 1889 she began to keep a diary in which her full quality, her vitality, which she remarked upon in herself as amounting to the "potency of a

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Bismarck," gave the lie to her weakness. The diary represents on the one hand her acceptance of female anonymity—it was a perfectly private document—and on the other her defiance of it; for it showed such power of style and thought as to constitute, as Henry wrote when he saw it after her death, "a new claim for the family renown." Her other act of life was her death. When she discovered she had cancer, she went almost gladly to meet it, the long process of "killing herself" now being taken over by murderous cells in her breast, and she becoming herself a philosophic, almost dispassionate witness.

Alice James's story is told completely, with the superb literary grace and intelligence worthy of its subject, by Jean Strouse. This remarkable biography also places its central figure in a larger social context with a vivid foreground of nearer figures, the other members of the James family. She is perhaps too diffident in the realm of psychological analysis—but one can be drawn into the speculative spider-trap too readily when one studies the complex web of James family relationships. In any case, she has discovered a new kind of subject and a new form for biography. In dramatizing such a life as Alice James's, she both validates its importance, showing the achievement even in a life outwardly inactive, and demonstrates that personal histories of supreme interest can be made out of the chronicles of inner being.

MILLICENT BELL

THE VITAL CENTER

EDGES OF EXTREMITY: SOME PROBLEMS OF LITERARY MODERNISM. By Kingsley Widmer. The University of Tulsa Monograph Series Number 17. $4.00.

While the volume of writing on the classic modernists has, by now, reached overwhelming proportions, the body of criticism that addresses the whole of modernism is surprisingly small, contentious, and inconclusive. Surprising but not surprising, when one thinks about it. There is still a lively debate about the nature of romanticism, about the imputed rationality of the eighteenth century, and E. M. W. Tillyard once published a book

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with the arresting title *The English Renaissance: Fact or Fiction*, as if to raise doubts about whether there ever was an English Renaissance. The great periods always invite redefinition, and that the enterprise seems far from complete with the period that embraces the first half of the present century is hardly remarkable. Yet there is a curious quality to those few treatments of the nature of the period, as if that body of literature that we all know best, the age of Joyce, Lawrence, Yeats, Mann, Kafka, Gide, and Faulkner, were not a gestalt, which we could now happily attempt to enclose, but a Rorschach test into which we look, nervously finding self-projections.

Kingsley Widmer's *Edges of Extremity*, although physically a monograph, modest in size, has nonetheless a particular resonance, both as an interim summary of Widmer's career as a distinguished critic—of Melville, Lawrence, Conrad, Henry Miller, and a dozen others—and as Widmer's own contribution to the unresolved question of where the center of modernism lies. Widmer is variously graceful and waspish with other people's senses of that center, laying out, in his early pages, a quite biased but splendidly succinct summary of Howe, Marcuse, Trilling, Ortega, Ellmann, Daniel Bell, Maurice Beebe, Eugene Goodheart, Gerald Graff, and Malcolm Bradbury. Done with his foils, Widmer defines his own center. And that center, for him, is best located, paradoxically, by marking out certain "extremities," moral and cultural anxieties pushed to disturbing and unresolvable ends. It is less a common ideology or social stance or esthetic that he seeks to name than a common rhythm or impulse, an inexorable movement toward nihilism.

The method works best with Conrad, his first exemplary figure. Widmer measures the curious, often insupportable elevation of "simple ideas," the distrust of mind, the full awareness of the malevolence of the world, and the baroque indirection of the prose, finding that, "in his ideological melodramas, it is often exemplary the way the nihilist triumphs over the ostensible anti-nihilist, the villainous intellectual over his conservative longings, the provocative modernist over the mere moralist." With Lawrence, the exposition is less striking because it is more familiar—the use of *The Man Who Died* and *Lady Chatterley* to show a movement beyond culture and class. With Faulkner, the intent is to trace, using *Light in August*, the full measure of the appalling burden of the past and its renunciation, especially the renunciation of the Protestant ethos. Finally, briefly, Céline, Richard Wright, and Nathanael West provide three different versions of anger, cultural opposition, and extremity.

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It was not his intention, Widmer argues at his conclusion, to wave aside the modernists' "positive longings for a humane fidelity, an impassioned communalism, an heroic stylization, an undoomed ethos, a tenderness of feeling, a lyrical ordering, and other goodness." Rather it was to locate certain terminal energies—toward anarchy, atheism, nihilism, and cultural rage—to demonstrate their centrality, and to assert their continuing relevance, for the contrary extremity in the face of official culture seems no less urgent than it did fifty years ago.

Readers of Widmer's exemplary figures are likely to feel that significant works elude the formula—his reading of Conrad hardly speaks to the force of *Youth* or *The Secret Sharer*, nor does his reading of Faulkner speak to the power of *The Old Man* or *The Bear*. Yet, aware of its size and scope, one responds to the book as a polemic, protesting against the estheticizing and domesticating of the great modernists. And as a polemic, it has two effects, one good, one not so good.

A hard man is good to find; there is no doubt that the edge of the great modernists has been blunted by the mountain of criticism that makes them, at once, more intelligible and less perverse, and our sense of the modernists needs always to be put back in touch with their extremities. Yet fixing the nature of modernism by naming its extremities—nihilism, atheism, anarchism—distorts, despite Widmer's disclaimer, first by simplifying the extraordinary range of modernism, second by flattening out the irony so central to the modernist imagination. It is not hard to begin to assemble a list of crucially important figures who cannot be described in Widmer's terms, figures who find their own perverse energies, but who mark out a territory by no means nihilistic—Rilke, for example, or William Carlos Williams. As for modernism's irony, Mann and Joyce found their own ways of fathoming the abyss and little to praise in their official cultures. Yet both of them found the management of distance and a pervasive doubleness of vision so necessary to their art that they would have been appalled to have found themselves described by Widmer's epithets. Both bracing and abrasive, as Widmer surely intended it to be, *Edges of Extremity* does what it can to counter the neutralization of that brilliant strain of nay-saying that runs through the modernist movement. But as a synthesis of the whole of the movement, it is one more look into the Rorschach test.

PHILIP STEVICK

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LETTERS

Misreading Sakharov

To the Editor:

You read Sakharov's letter as an Aesopean warning against exaggerating the dangers of nuclear weapons and as predicating disarmament negotiations on achieving a prior "strategic parity" in them. But you ignore the context of his reference to nuclear power and erroneously omit a qualifying phrase in quoting him on parity.

He speaks of exaggerating the danger of nuclear power in a paragraph about nonmilitary applications of science and technology, and in another paragraph, speaking about disarmament, he specifically defines parity in reference to "conventional arms," referring to "additional agreements" for weapons of mass destruction.

These distinctions are crucial. It is quite possible to be a proponent of nuclear power for peaceful energy and an opponent of the nuclear arms race, as my colleague Hans Bethe is.

Moreover, to postpone negotiation until "parity" in nuclear weapons is reached is to put negotiation off indefinitely, because the argument about the various advantages and disadvantages of sophisticated nuclear devices is interminable. Meanwhile there is a rising level of international insecurity as a consequence of nuclear competition. I see nothing in Sakharov's letter to justify our administration's reckless pursuit of this competition in "overkill." Surely, making Aesop sound like our current Secretary of Defense would dismay Sakharov.

Cushing Strout
Ithaca, New York

Editor's note:

Cushing Strout's letter is an example of the misreading of Sakharov's statement—and of the questions it addresses—that I spoke of in my comment on the conference honoring Sakharov. Strout's letter is also an example of my remark that "part of the liberal mind has been paralyzed by 'progressive' myths."

I did not, as Strout implies, confuse nuclear power with nuclear armament. I said simply that it was significant that everyone at the conference ignored Sakharov's remark that "the dangers of nuclear power have been exaggerated in the West, and that such distortion is harmful."

The omission of the phrase "in conventional arms" was a typographical error, not a calculated misstatement, as Strout suggests. But it does not affect my argument. For my point was

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that Sakharov was saying that both conventional parity and nuclear parity were conditions for an agreement to prohibit nuclear arms and a first strike.

Strout's insistence that armament negotiations cannot be put off till parity is reached is just the opposite of what Sakharov is saying. And Strout ignores Sakharov's statement that "if totalitarian expansion is brought to an end, then agreements should be reached prohibiting the first use of nuclear weapons, and later, banning such weapons."

Strout's last remark about our "reckless pursuit of the competition in 'overkill,' " and my making Aesop, that is, Sakharov, sound like Haig is also in total contradiction to the letter and the spirit of Sakharov's plea. (Strout's wit is no more to the point than his politics.) Furthermore, it is a clear example of the tendency of a part of the liberal-left to place unilateral blame on American armament for "the rising level of international insecurity," and to ignore the meaning of the massive nuclear armament of the Soviet Union.

What is dismaying Sakharov and other Soviet dissidents is the political innocence of some Western intellectuals.

W.P.

Noam Chomsky:
RADICAL PRIORITIES
Edited by C.P. Otero

In a new collection of the political writings of Noam Chomsky, Carlos-Peregrin Otero brings together some of the most outstanding reflections of the world-famous linguist. This is the first edition of essays to appear of Chomsky's writings since 1973. What is particularly significant about this collection is that C.P. Otero lucidly presents an analysis and overview of Chomsky's social and political philosophy. For the first time the roots of Chomsky's politics are examined in relationship to his theory of linguistics. Prof. Otero teaches linguistics at UCLA.

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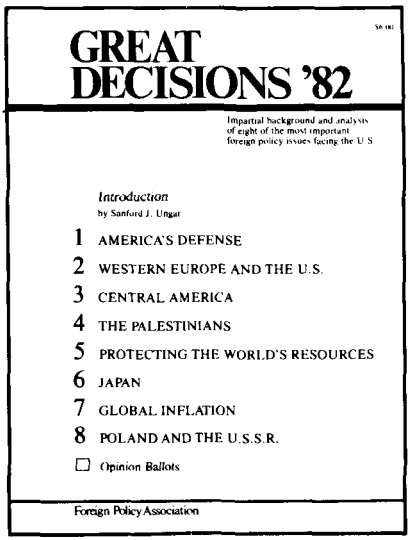
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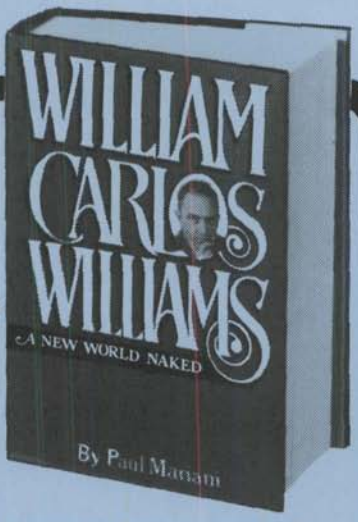

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